DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 279 607 SP 027 966

TITLE	Time for Results: The Governors' 1991 Report on Education. Supporting Works. Task Force on Parent Involvement and Choice.
INSTITUTION	National Governors' Association, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	Aug 86
NOTE	122p.; For summary report, see SP 027 962; for individual task force reports, see SP 027 963-969.
AVAILABLE FROM	National Governors' Association Publications Office, 444 N. Capitol St., Washington, DC 20001-1572 ($6.00).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Aspiration; *Change Strategies; *Government School Relationship; Magnet Schools; *Parent Participation; *Parent School Relationship; Parent Teacher Cooperation; *School Choice; *State Action; State Aid; Tax Credits
IDENTIFIERS	*Time for Results (Governors 1991 Report on Educ)

ABSTRACT

The members of this task force examined ways states could encourage greater parental involvement in, and choice among, public schools. Following a list of the charges to the task force and information on the hearings and presenters, five papers are presented: (1) "Expanding Educational Opportunity and Choice" (Cindy K. Currence); (2) "The Massachusetts Experience with Public School Choice" (Charles L. Glenn); (3) "Putting Choice to Work for Public Education" (Charles L. Glenn); (4) "Providing Data and Policy Recommendations in Answer to Twelve Questions Raised by the Task Force" (Evans Clinchy); and (5) "Responses to the National Governors' Association on Public School Choice" (Mary Anne Raywid). Additional information is provided on highlights of state policies and further resources. (JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

TASK FORCE ON PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND CHOICE

Supporting Works

ED279607

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

027 966

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J. Wills

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Time For Results

THE GOVERNORS' 1991 REPORT ON EDUCATION

2

TIME FOR RESULTS: The Governors' 1991 Report on Education

Supporting Works

Task Force on Parent Involvement and Choice

CHAIRMAN

Richard D. Lamm
Governor of Colorado

TASK FORCE MEMBERS

Michael N. Castle
Governor of Delaware
Vice Chairman

A. P. Lutali
Governor of American Samoa

Edwin W. Edwards
Governor of Louisiana

Rudy Perpich
Governor of Minnesota

Robert Kerrey
Governor of Nebraska

Toney Anaya
Governor of New Mexico

Anthony S. Earl
Governor of Wisconsin

August 1986.

Published by the National Governors' Association Center for Policy Research and Analysis, 444 North Capitol St., Washington, D.C. 20001-1572.

Papers in this report were prepared under a subcontract from the National Governors' Association Center for Policy Research and Analysis with funding from the Lyndhurst Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, and the U.S. Department of Education.

Contractors undertaking such projects are encouraged to express their professional judgments. The interpretation and viewpoints stated in this document do not necessarily represent the official position or policy of the NGA, the Lyndhurst Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, or the U.S. Department of Education and no official endorsement should be inferred. Governmental agencies, groups, and organizations are permitted to duplicate this report in whole or in part, provided that proper credit is cited within the reproduction.

Printed in the United States of America.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements i

PART ONE: The Task Force

1. Charge to the Task Force 3
2. Task Force Activities: Hearings and Presenters 5

PART TWO: Papers

1. Expanding Educational Opportunity and Choice 11
   Cindy K. Currence
2. The Massachusetts Experience with Public School Choice 31
   Charles L. Glenn
3. Putting Choice to Work for Public Education 47
   Charles L. Glenn
4. Providing Data and Policy Recommendations in Answer to Twelve Questions Raised by the Task Force 54
   Evans Clinchy
5. Responses to the National Governors' Association on Public School Choice 98
   Mary Anne Raywid

Part Three: Additional Resources

1. Highlights of State Policies 124
2. Additional Sources 128

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many individuals and organizations have devoted enormous time and energy to the year-long effort that created "Time for Results: The Governors' 1991 Report on Education" and the "Supporting Works." The Governors who served on the task forces appointed key staff members who worked not only on their individual task force report, but often assisted other task forces as well. For the Task Force on Parent Involvement and Choice these include: Steve Welchert, chairman, Marva Hammons, and Barbara O'Brien, Colorado; Douglas Rothwell and Kathryn Way, Delaware; Luciano Baca, New Mexico; Nancy J. Wenzel, Wisconsin; Stan Sibley, Nebraska; Ed Hunter and Lis Christenson, Minnesota; Mona Davis, Louisiana; and Fualileleo P. Sunia, American Samoa. Others who assisted include Della Stamps, Robin Swanson, Patti Lollar, and Jennifer Gavin of the Colorado Governor's office. Jennie Carter and Keel Hunt of Gov. Lamar Alexander's office helped coordinate the overall education initiative.

The National Governors' Association Center for Policy Research and Analysis coordinated the year-long project. Professional staff and consultants include Joe Nathan, Joan L. Wills, Evelyn Ganzglass, Carol Eliason, Rae Young Bond, Linda Myers Dove, Jean McDonald, and Cindy K. Currence. Editorial support was provided by Mark Miller, Karen Eldridge, Diane Greene, and Alan Janesch. Expert secretarial assistance was provided by Beverly Bowers, Linda Burnette, Luisa Farrell, Francine Matthews, and Deborah Woods.

The Task Force on Parent Involvement and Choice of the National Governors' Association has been fortunate to receive the cooperation and aid of the distinguished panelists listed in this compendium. Dr. Ricky Takai, Planning and Evaluation Services, and Dr. Charles Haughey and Jim Bencivenga of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the U.S. Department of Education provided invaluable assistance throughout the work of the task force. Funding from the Lyndhurst Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, and the U.S. Department of Education made this work possible.

Charge to the Task Force on Parent Involvement and Choice

The members of this task force examined ways states could encourage greater parental involvement in and choice among schools. The two concepts were examined as related strategies to improve the effectiveness of our nation's schools.

Governors recognized that these ideas often are controversial, and thought it vital to hear from educators, parents, students, researchers, and representatives of various organizations. The task force gathered research, reviewed literature, and collected testimony about personal experiences to address the following questions:

A. What does research show about the impact of parent involvement?

B. What models have been created to expand educational choice for families?

C. What does research show about the impact on student achievement, parental attitudes, and teacher morale of various programs to expand educational choices for families?

D. What are the implications of choice for equality of educational opportunity?

E. What different kinds of programs have states established to provide choices among different schools?

The task force was charged with answering the following policy-related questions:

A. How might states encourage greater parental involvement in schools?

B. How have states chosen to use choice to improve educational opportunities?

C. What mechanisms might be included in policies to avoid unintended consequences?

D. What is the state's role in matters such as:

1. Helping to develop parental skill and interest in selecting among various schools

2. Helping school districts plan, administer and finance the system

3. Establishing guidelines governing selection procedures public schools would be permitted to adopt

4. Adjusting funding formulas among school districts

5. Establishing guidelines for advertising programs

6. Funding transportation costs

Task Force Activities: Hearings and Presenters

The Task Force on Parent Involvement and Choice held two hearings. The first, in Denver, Colorado, December 16, 1985, examined programs to provide choice among public schools and to enhance parent involvement in schools.

Denver, Colorado, December 16, 1985

Charles Davis
Vice President
Education Clinics, Inc.
Washington

Venancio Esparza
Superintendent
Colorado School District 18

Calvin Frazier
Commissioner of Education
State of Colorado

Mary Hatwood Futrell
President
National Education Association
Washington, D.C.

Charles Glenn
Chief, Bureau of Equal Educational Opportunity
Massachusetts Department of Education

Beverly Gunst
Principal
Gilpin Extended Day School
Denver, Colo.

Gordon Heaton
President
Colorado Education Association

Mary Patricia Howe
Program Manager
Gilpin Extended Day School
Denver, Colo.

The Honorable Connie Levi
Majority Leader
Minnesota House of Representatives

Clark Maxwell
Director
Florida Community College System

Carol Naff
President
State of Colorado Parent Teacher Association

The Honorable Albert Quie
Former Governor
State of Minnesota

Ruth Randall
Commissioner of Education
State of Minnesota

Mary Anne Raywid
Center for the Study of Educational Alternatives
Hofstra University

Dorothy Rich
President
Home and School Institute
Washington, D.C.

Albert Shanker
President
American Federation of Teachers

Sylvia Smith
Principal
Knight Fundamental Academy
Denver, Colo., Public Schools

Anthony Trujillo, Superintendent
Sweetwater School District, California

Manya Ungar
First Vice President
National Parent Teacher Association

The second meeting, in Washington, D.C., February 22, 1986, reviewed the possible impact of permitting families to select from among public, private, and parochial schools, with tax funds supporting their choices. The witnesses also described other ways to effectively involve parents in their children's education.

Washington, D.C., February 22, 1986

Tom Ascik
Executive Director
Clearinghouse on Educational Choice
Arlington, Va.

Ken Bresin
Director of Legislative Affairs
Minnesota Education Association
St. Paul, Minn.

Joyce Epstein
Center for Social Organization of Schools
Johns Hopkins University
Baltimore, Md.

Mario Fantini
Dean, School of Education
University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Louis Grumet
Executive Director
New York State School Boards Association, Inc.
Albany, N.Y.

Anne Hallett
Executive Director
Citizens Education Center, Northwest
Seattle, Wash.

William Kristol
Chief of Staff
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
Washington, D.C.

Karen Leveridge
Oklahoma Network for Excellence
Oklahoma City, Okla.

Henry Levin
Professor, School of Education
Stanford University

Carlos M. Medina
Superintendent
Community School District 4
New York, N.Y.

Van D. Mueller
Professor, Department of Educational Policy and Administration
University of Minnesota

James Nutall
Education Advisor
Council for Black Economic Agenda
Washington, D.C.

Dorothy Rich
President
Home and School Institute
Washington, D.C.

The Honorable George Spaulding
State Senator
State of Vermont

David Williams
Director, Parent Involvement Survey
Southwest Educational Development Laboratory
Austin, Texas

Ross Zerchykov
Vice President
Institute for Responsive Education
Boston, Mass.

PART TWO: Papers

EXPANDING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY AND CHOICE

Prepared by Cindy K. Currence
Consultant
National Governors' Association

THE IMPORTANCE OF PARENTS

The important and, in fact, crucial role of parents, family, and home in determining children's cognitive development and achievement has been documented in numerous studies. In addition, it has been shown that such factors are more influential than school factors for such development (Coleman 1966; Jencks 1972; Mayeske 1973; Mosteller and Moynihan 1972).

Socioeconomic status, as defined by educational, occupational, and income levels, has been the most frequently studied family characteristic and one that has been consistently linked to achievement (Fotheringham and Creal 1980; Jencks 1972; Keeves 1972; Vernon 1979). While significant and interesting, this research does not really explain how the effects are mediated to the child (Fotheringham and Creal 1980).

In an effort to understand the mediating aspects of family and home environments, a second line of research has examined the relationship between family and the development of intelligence, competence, and achievement in children. A number of factors have been found to be significantly related (Becher 1984):

- First, children with higher scores on measures of achievement, competence, and intelligence had parents who held higher educational expectations and aspirations for them than did parents of children who did not score as high. Parents of the former children also exerted more pressure for achievement, provided more academic guidance, and exhibited a higher level of general interest in their children (Boocock 1972; Entwisle and Hayduk 1978; Gordon 1978, Hess et al. 1979; Keeves 1975; Parsons 1981; Schaefer 1972; Seginer 1983).

- Second, parents of children with higher scores had considerably more interactions that were responsive to children or contingent upon their responses than did parents whose children did not score as high (Bradley et al. 1977, Gordon 1978, Ladd et al. 1981).

- Third, children with higher scores had parents who had perceptions of themselves as teachers of their children (Brophy 1970; Gordon 1978; Hess and Shipman 1965; Nottleman 1978).

- Fourth, children with higher scores had parents who acted as stronger models of learning and achievement for their children (Seginer 1983).

- Parents of higher scoring children also used more advanced levels and styles of thought and language in interactions with their children (Gordon 1978; Hess and Shipman 1965; Olmsted and Jester 1972).

This paper reviews literature and research on parent involvement and choice, synthesizes the presentations of panelists at the two task force hearings, and presents models of state activities and programs related to parent involvement and educational choice.

- o Finally, higher scoring children came from homes in which there was considerably more reinforcement of school behavior (Atkinson and Forehand 1979; Barth 1979).

Researchers also have found considerable evidence indicating that when parents are actively involved in the education of their children, student achievement improves (Andrews et al. 1975; Beller 1969; Brookover 1965, 1967; Eash et al. 1980; Gordon et al. 1978; Henderson 1981; Herman and Yeh 1980; Irvine 1979; Mowry 1972; Olmsted 1977; Wagenaar 1977).

Research also indicates that, as a result of parent involvement in educational programs, parents have developed more positive attitudes about school and school personnel and they have exhibited more positive attitudes than parents who did not become involved (Armer et al. 1977; Clarizio 1968; Evans 1973; Herman and Yeh 1980; Young 1975). In addition, after becoming involved in educational programs, parents have helped gather community support for programs and have become more involved in community activities (Gordon 1978). Another positive outcome of parental involvement is that the relationship between the parent and child improves and the frequency of the parents' involvement in the child's activities increases both at school and elsewhere (Rempson 1967, Schaefer 1972, Young 1975).

Such research findings have given impetus to improving parent/teacher/school relationships and greatly expanding the role parents play in child care and educational programs. Interest in such efforts has grown steadily as social, political, economic, educational, theoretical, empirical, and legislative forces have converged in response to difficult social and educational problems and changing cultural and societal norms (Becher 1984). These factors include declining achievement scores, rising educational costs, distrust of bureaucratic institutions, feelings of alienation, recognition of cultural and ethnic differences, and renewed interest in the basic American concept of participatory democracy.

The consequence of these events is that vast numbers of people are being either strongly encouraged or required to participate in parent involvement efforts (Becher 1984).

THE PROBLEM

Yet this is a time of parental disenchantment with public education (Herman and Yeh 1983).

Results of the "15th Annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward Public Schools" (1983) indicate that while respondents believe more parent involvement and better parent teacher relationships are necessary for the improvement of schools, a major problem facing the schools is a lack of interest on the part of both parents and school faculty in parent involvement. In addition, R. Jackson and H. Stretch (1976), G. Hegenbart (1980), and M. Langenbrunner and K. Thornburg (1980) report survey results indicating that parents, teachers, and administrators all believe there is significantly less actual parent involvement than is preferred or desired.

Administrators indicate that while they "believe in" parent participation, it is one of their hardest tasks because parents refuse to participate (Duea and Bishop 1980; Goldhammer 1971; Hightower 1978). Furthermore, teachers report parent relationships to be one of the most bothersome and frequently occurring types of problems.

Parents, on the other hand, report that teachers and administrators are apathetic about parental involvement. John Goodlad and J. Klein (1970) found that while teachers sincerely believed they were encouraging parents to be involved in school programs, direct observations of teacher behaviors by trained observers indicated that teachers in fact did very little to encourage involvement. Similarly, K. Tudor (1977) found that the more positive the attitudes educators had toward parent involvement, the more parent involvement occurred. Research by Langenbrunner and Thornburg (1980) and Hegenbart (1980) suggests that parents are very willing and interested in becoming involved. Related studies indicate, however, that in many cases, teachers initiate contact with parents only when a problem or crisis situation has developed.

Experts suggest that an evolving American society has had a significant and detrimental impact on parent involvement in the schools. As Carol Kimmel of the National PTA told the National Commission on Excellence in Education during its deliberations (1983):

> The erosion between school and home continues to increase. You know the reasons we give -- working mothers, single parents, mobile society, movement of children from neighborhood schools, television, teen-age pregnancies, and so on. Administrators and teachers say parents don't care, don't help, and expect the school to assume the responsibility for all the things that school and home community used to share. Parents say that administrators and teachers don't care, won't listen, and really don't want them in the schools.
>
> I am sure there is enough blame to go around and we have worn out all those excuses on both sides....There is no doubt as to the general agreement that parents must assume responsibility and support of the schools....Unfortunately, with the heavy load that the schools are already carrying, the school system must assume the leadership in bridging this chasm.

Given the importance of parental involvement in improving schools and individual student performance, researchers have examined various methods of improving parental involvement.

A number of studies indicate that expanding families' educational choices can have a significant positive impact. Mary Anne Raywid (1984), in her review of more than 100 studies examining the impact of expanding choice among public schools, concluded that:

- When allowed to select from various programs, parents are much more satisfied and often more involved in their children's education. Community members who do not have children in school also speak more highly of districts in which choices are available.

- Students benefit in a number of ways by having options. Behavior, attendance, self-concept, and attitudes toward learning and school improve as students are allowed to attend different kinds of programs. In many cases, academic gains were noted as well.

- Teachers and administrators said they feel more like professionals when allowed to create distinctive programs from which families could select. Many reported putting much more energy and enthusiasm into their work.

CHOICE PLANS

Choice plans have poliferated within public education during the past twelve years. Raywid (1984) reports that factors contributing to the growing demand for educational options include:

- The perception that parents have very little -- and less and less -- to say about the education of their children;

- The fact that over the years, control of schools has moved increasingly in the direction of central district offices, states, the federal government, and "ancillary structures" such as textbook publishers, testing services, and accreditation agencies;

- The sense of impotence and ensuing alienation experienced by many parents in trying to deal with local schools;

- The growing evidence of the disaffection and psychic estrangement from schools of those who working within them -- teachers as well as students;

- The explication and spread of the notion that there is no "one best" system of education for youngsters;

- The growing resentment of service agencies and the ensuring critique of the service professions; and

- The intensification of particular social problems including segregation, school violence and vandalism, the decline of the cities, and youth unemployment.

Consequently, offering parents the opportunity to "vote with their feet" has become very appealing (Raywid 1984; Murnane 1984; Lines and McGuire 1984).

Attempts to increase choice among schools have given rise primarily to alternative schools, magnet schools, and minischools. Surveys conducted since the 1970s show that the movement is widespread. A 1974 survey estimated that

one in four districts in the nation offered alternative education programs; 66 percent of the districts with more than 25,000 students said they had alternatives or "options" (NSBA 1976). Depending on the definition, the number of alternative schools has been variously estimated at from fewer than ten in 1970 to more than 1,200 in 1975 (Proshanskey 1981, Bass 1978).

While that rate of growth has declined, alternative schools are thriving, according to a 1982 survey of secondary alternatives (PAE 1982). Students seldom leave an alternative school, and when they do, it is most often to attend another (Proshanskey 1981). Some alternative schools have focused on the basics while others have specialized in science, math, art, music, or nontraditional subject matter (Bass 1978). Some have been established to provide compensatory education to the educationally disadvantaged. Many have adhered to the traditional school curriculum but have emphasized nontraditional teaching and assessment methods, e.g., open classrooms, nongraded programs, or individual-directed study. Alternatives are more prevalent at the secondary level (NCOPE 1972, PAE 1982). While the period of rapid growth apparently is over, school districts across the nation continue to expand on the concept (Lines and McGuire 1984).

Magnet schools, choice plans with the dual purpose of desegregation and alternative schooling, also have proliferated in recent years. They usually are located within predominantly minority neighborhoods and emphasize special curricular goals or a teaching philosophy as the means of attracting students to the school.

Some magnet schools provide specialized training, allowing students to receive instruction in courses for which the demand is too low at individual schools. Where economies of scale permit, minischools have served the same purpose by providing specialized curricula and/or learning environments as a subsystem within a particular neighborhood school.

Another method of expanding choice among schools has been to allow students to attend any public school within the state; in such cases education funding follows the student. Parents of secondary school students in Vermont have been allowed for nearly a century to send their children to any public or state-approved, private, nonsectarian school in the state if their own town school board gave permission. South Dakota last year adopted legislation to expand opportunities for students attending high schools with fewer than forty-five students. In Wisconsin, Massachusetts, and Missouri, the state provides funds permitting movement between some urban and suburban districts to enhance desegregation programs.

Other choice plans focus on particular students. A number of states (Arizona, California, Connecticut, and Kentucky) provide tuition vouchers for handicapped children where the local public schools do not provide an appropriate education (Lines and McGuire 1984).

Colorado legislators have instituted a public school choice plan limited to students who have failed in traditional educational settings. Washington state funds nearly a dozen "educational clinics," privately run programs for students working to obtain their General Educational Development diploma.

California has adopted the Washington legislation to establish similar clinics there.

And last year, Minnesota began permitting juniors and seniors enrolled in the state's public schools to take courses at colleges, universities, and vocational and technical programs (Education Week 1985).

LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM EXISTING PROGRAMS

Programs targeted for disruptive youngsters, underachievers, dropouts, and other "at-risk" students have provided instances of impressive success. It was, in fact, the success of such programs that initially recommended alternatives to many sponsors (Raywid 1984). These individual early programs often brought markedly improved student attendance and enhanced attitudes toward school and learning (Janssen 1974; Smith, Barr, and Burke 1976). Discipline problems were substantially reduced (Duke and Perry 1978) and violence disappeared (Berger 1974). Moreover, in schools where standard achievement measures could be used as grounds for comparisons, e.g., test scores and college admissions, they showed that alternatives' students "perform at least as well as their counterparts in traditional schools programs, and usually better" (Janssen 1974). Later studies have confirmed that alternatives "typically lead to greater academic achievement on the part of their students. At least some alternatives send a substantially higher percentage of their graduates on to college than do comparable schools in the same district...(and)...inquiries to date suggest that alternative school graduates may outperform the others in college" (Raywid 1981).

The research also suggests that similar benefits accrue to average and above-average students in choice programs. However, fewer investigations and comparative studies have been undertaken in these kinds of schools of choice and, indeed, almost all of the evidence regarding impacts comes from individual program evaluations.

These evaluations make clear that the attitudes of students toward themselves and toward school are enhanced when choice is involved. Attendance and school involvement increase, and dropout rates decline. Higher grade point averages and test scores and gains in math and reading levels are common, although academic impacts are less clear and consistent in these evaluations than other sorts of outcomes. "The academic evidence seems positive, even though it remains tentative and somewhat scant" (Raywid 1984a, p. 77).

One individual study of Pennsylvania's Alternative Program in State College, however, demonstrates remarkable academic success. In the state-administered quality assessment program, which yields statewide percentile rankings and assesses achievement levels in relation to reasonable expectations for a particular school, students in the choice program ranked in the 99th percentile for performance in mathematics, reading, writing, knowledge of law and government, and analytic thinking. The percentile fell to 90 on humanities and science, but returned to the 99th percentile with respect to student self-esteem, interest in school and learning, understanding of others, sense of societal responsibility, and appreciation of human

accomplishment. In eight of the eleven measures of school quality, the choice program scored above state expectations for the student (Lear 1982).

R. Murnane's hypothesis (1984) for the positive impact of choice plans on student achievement suggests that three mechanisms of the programs -- matching, choosing, and being chosen -- stimulate such outcomes.

Murnane suggests that because students have different capabilities for learning under various curricula and teaching styles, allowing families to choose among alternative programs and clearly defined curricula and known teaching staffs may facilitate the matching of student interests and capabilities with program characteristics, thereby stimulating student effort and cooperation.

The act of choosing may itself stimulate effort and cooperation by providing an occasion for students and their families to discuss educational goals and the kinds of actions that are needed to accomplish the goals. In other words, the process of decisionmaking may help students and their families appreciate the extent to which educational achievement depends on a student's efforts and the support of parents.

Being chosen to participate in a competitive program also may stimulate effort and cooperation, Murnane adds. This may be particularly important when students understand that a record of sustained effort and cooperation is necessary for continuation in the program.

> Clearly, the three mechanisms are closely related. It is useful to distinguish among them, however, because each implies a different emphasis in program design. The matching hypothesis implies that the critical need is for each student to participate in the "right program," but that the process used to achieve this match is not important. Consequently, the full benefits of choice might be achieved if an informed school district official made the program choice for students whose parents do not focus on the task of choosing. The other two hypotheses imply that the decision process itself is important, although in different and competing ways.
>
> The choosing hypothesis implies that the system design should encourage students and their parents to weigh the merits of alternative programs and consider carefully the responsibilities that participation in each program implies. Operation of this mechanism implicitly requires that students be permitted to enroll in the program the family chooses. Thus, a critical task in system design is to encourage expansion of popular programs.
>
> The being chosen hypothesis implies that the system design should encourage competitive admissions to popular programs so that those chosen will have the sense of participation in something special (Murnane 1984, p. 4).

A major study of magnet schools provides some of the most concrete data on the results of choice programs (Blank et al. 1983).

In many respects, magnet schools have been extremely successful and have brought high quality programs into areas that despaired of seeing such change. In assessing the change, the Blank study, commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education, applied two measures of quality: processes and arrangements observable daily within the school, and student achievement outcomes.

The study findings reveal that the "degree of interest in, and commitment to, magnet schools at the local level is much higher than anticipated." In addition, the Blank research found that "some local school boards, administrators, teachers, and parents are finding magnet schools to be vaulable as an approach to revitalization and reform of their schools." This appears to be the result of the innovative quality of many of the programs; staff commitment and dedication to them; and a shared perception of specialness on the part of teachers and students, generating an unusual camaraderie. The reasons for this, in turn, may relate to teacher interest in the theme, and to better student behavior and performance by virtue of learner interest. As one teacher put it, "I can teach here. I don't have to worry about motivating students."

The Blank study also found that rates of parental satisfaction are higher in magnets than in other schools, and that even among adults who do not have children attending them, magnets generate perceptions of quality. However, despite increased parental satisfaction with the schools, the Blank research did not find higher levels of parental involvement. Parents may be involved, the research indicates, but if so, it is typically in roles created for community members, not explicitly for parents. Magnets do seem to have generated some rather unusual involvement patterns with local citizens, organizations, and institutions, and these may figure in some of the enthusiasm of local adults without youngsters in these schools. People in fields and organizations related to the magnet theme sometimes perform instructional functions, both in the school and elsewhere, as, for example, the supervisors of interns. But magnets also have generated more novel connections. For instance, there are cases of magnet/university linkage whereby the university provides diverse forms of technical assistance in a continuing relationship. Magnets frequently are involved in adopt-a-school programs, and private organizations also have provided unusual sorts of services to them, as in the case of the corporation that loaned a school district two marketing executives to assist in designing a recruitment strategy for its new magnet.

Although magnets offer a number of advantages as a family choice model, there have been some implementation problems and unanticipated negative consequences involved (Blank et al. 1983).

> First, magnets seem to be in a damned-if-you-do, damned-if-you-don't position with respect to their

> desegregation purpose. If they fail to attract sufficient whites, or sufficient minorities, they have of course failed to desegregate. On the other hand, if they are too successful in attracting either majority or minority students, they tend to re-segregate or 'ghettoize' in the absence of quotas. And if quotas or insufficient spaces bar applicants, complaints are understandable. These fundamental difficulties have sometimes yielded cases where individuals and groups have felt particularly abused -- e.g., blacks who have been deprived of attending a nearby magnet, while whites who chose it are welcomed and bused in -- in the interests of achieving racial balance -- and neighborhood schools left less racially balanced due to the exodus of youngsters leaving for a magnet school.
>
> In addition to the finding of several studies that the overall contribution of magnets to desegregation is slight, there have also been cases where magnets have actually appeared to decrease overall desegregation by concentrating it in the magnet schools -- i.e., by attracting a substantial portion of a relatively small minority away from regular schools and concentrating them in magnet schools (Raywid 1984, p. 29).

The Blank research found still another problem with the admissions requirements of magnet schools. Although the requirements revealed by the recent study are hardly steep enough to support charges of elitism, 89 percent of the programs did screen out the most problematic students; most of the schools had entrance requirements, though modest, such as performance at grade level and the absence of serious social and behavioral problems.

Such problems have resulted in charges that magnet schools are creating a dual education structure in large urban districts, privileged in that they are able to select their students and get rid of those who fail to measure up (Arnove and Strout 1978).

Magnets have a special advantage in that in some ways, because they are frequently exempted from many administrative regulations, school leaders are able to operate their institutions in ways more characteristic of private schools. Magnet leaders have more discretion in hiring and spending, and in selecting students they will teach. In addition, magnets, on the average, spend 8 percent more per pupil (Blank et al. 1983).

Finally, C. Warren (1978) suggests that magnets cannot bring about ethnic and socioeconomic desegregation precisely because choice is a key operating principle. On one hand, if student enrollment is voluntary, you do not have a magnet program. On the other hand, in a family choice system, active choice of school -- through residential location or the enrollment decision -- is clearly related to socioeconomic status, income, and parents' educational level (Lines and McGuire 1984).

In some choice systems, parents' choices have resulted in clustering of students by family background factors like income, education, attitudes, and childrearing values. Further, low-income students ended up in highly structured settings emphasizing obedience and the attainment of lower level cognitive skills, while more advantaged students ended up disproportionately in more open setting emphasizing critical thinking, independence, and attainment of higher order skills (Rand 1981).

Such an outcome is not uncharacteristic of how students are grouped for schooling under the present system. The major lesson to be learned, perhaps, is that absent other intervention, e.g., safeguards for information and access, social class divisions that now characterize schools may not be overcome by choice plans.

The research findings of the Blank study (1983) led the investigators to recommend the following as a model design for magent schools:

- o Districtwide access for students on the basis of voluntary preference;
- o A curricular theme that is definite, appealing, and distinctive;
- o A principal and staff capable of accomplishing the theme as it has been presented to the public;
- o Instruction that is regularly reviewed by the school district for its rigor and fairness, i.e., accountability;
- o A facility and site selected on the basis of racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic neutrality;
- o Good transportation and school security services;
- o Student and staff composition that closely reflects the racial and ethnic composition of the community;
- o A method of checks and balances that will prevent segregation or educational deprivation in nonmagnet schools; and
- o Adequate start-up funds for facilitating early success in implementation.

In Massachusetts, which has operated choice programs for more than two decades, officials have adopted over the years many of the above recommendations in response to problems as they have risen.

Officials in that state suggest that choice programs have succeeded there not "because of a 'master plan' or one-time policy decision, but in a succession of incremental steps" (Glenn 1986). Keys in this "incremental" development of choice programs include:

- The initial direct action by black parents to make choices for their children by seeking available seats in Boston and other cities and districts and then in suburban districts;

- Insistence by the state board that parent choices be supported when helpful to integration and prevented when harmful;

- Piloting urban magnet schools;

- Generous financial support by the Massachusetts legislature;

- The shift in state equity strategy from mandatory to voluntary approaches with no relaxation in the standard applied to their outcomes; and

- The enthusiastic adoption by parents, staff, and administrators in most Massachusetts cities of the idea of enhanced family choice as the basis not only for equity and integration, but also for educational improvement.

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

Many of the potential benefits and the potential problems of family choice programs seem to depend critically on the specifics of the regulation options and accountability procedures that define the plan. These specifics are not administrative details of second-order importance, researchers conclude, but central design issues.

In addition, further information must be gathered to provide conclusive detailed evidence on student achievement. And another area of concern, the question of what happens to students who are not admitted to the school of their choice, must be addressed and studied.

Policymakers considering implementation of choice programs should be aware of likely sources of tension in the design and operation of the programs (Murnane 1984, p. 38):

- Information provided to families about program attributes. Families want information on students' achievement; program staffs resist publication and distribution of this information.

- Rules regarding admission to popular programs. Program staffs want control over admissions and transfers; representatives of low-income families want admission procedures that guarantee access (or at least equal probability of access) for children from low-income families.

- Location of programs. Locating several programs within the same school satisfies parents' demands for choices close to home; it also increases conflicts among program staffs and threatens the distinctiveness of individual programs over time.

- Resources for family choice programs. Program staffs want higher-than-average resource levels and extra compensation for extra work; nonparticipating teachers want equal treatment of all teachers in the school district.

REFERENCES

Armer, Bill; Yeargen, C.; and Hannah, M. "Community Polarization Over Educational Programs Can be Avoided." Psychology in the Schools, Vol. 14, 1977, pp. 54-61.

Arnove, Robert, and Strout, Toby. "Magnets as Alternatives to Mandatory Busing." Changing Schools, Winter 1978.

Andrews, S.; Blumenthal, J.; Bache, W.; and Weinter, S. "The New Orleans Model: Parents as Early Childhood Educators". Paper presented at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Denver, Colo., April 1975.

Atkinson, B., and Forehand, R. "Home-Based Reinforcement Programs Designed to Modify Classroom Behavior: A Review and a Methodological Evaluation." Psychological Bulletin, Vol. 86, 1979.

Barth, Richard, "Home-Based Reinforcement of School Behavior: A Review and Analysis." Review of Educational Research, Vol. 49, 1979.

Bass, Gail. A Study of Alternatives in American Education, Volume I: District Policies and the Implementation of Change. Santa Monica, Calif.: The Rand Corporation, 1978.

Becher, Rhoda. "Parent Involvement: A Review of Research and Principles of Successful Practice." In Katz, L., (ed.), Current Topics in Early Childhood Education, Vol. VI. Norwood, N.J.: Ablex Publishing Corp., 1984.

Beller, E. "The Evaluation of Effects of Early Educational Intervention on Intellectual and Social Development of Lower-Class Disadvantaged Children." In Grotberg, E. (ed.), Critical Issues in Research Related to Disadvantaged Children. Princeton, N.J.: Educational Testing Service, 1969.

Berger, M. "Violence in the Schools." Bloomington, Ind.: Phi Delta Kappa, 1974.

Blank, Rolf, et al. Survey of Magnet Schools -- Final Report: Analyzing A Model for Quality Integrated Education. Washington, D.C.: James H. Lowry and Associates, 1983.

Boocock, S. An Introduction to the Sociology of Learning. Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1972.

Bradley, Robert; Caldwell, B.; and Elrado, R. "Home Environment, Social Status, and Mental Test Performance." Journal of Educational Psychology, Vol. 69, December 1977, pp. 697-701.

Brookover, W. Self-Concept of Ability and School Achievement II. East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State University, Bureau of Educational Research Services, 1965.

Brookover, W. Self-Concept of Ability and School Achievement III. East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State University, Bureau of Educational Research Services, 1967.

Brophy, Jere. "Mothers as Teachers of Their Own Preschool Children: The Influence of Socioeconomic Status and Task Structure on Teaching Specificity." Child Development, Vol. 41, March 1970, pp. 79-94.

Clarizio, H. "Maternal Attitude Change Associated with Involvement in Project head Start." Journal of Negro Education, Vol. 37, 1968.

Coleman, James. Equality of Educational Opportunity. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966.

Duea, Jerry, and Bishop, W. "The PROBE Results: Important Differences in Public and Professional Perceptions of the Schools." Phi Delta Kappan, Vol. 62, September 1980, pp. 50-52.

Duke, Daniel, and Perry, Cheryl. "Can Alternative Schools Succeed Where Benjamin Spock, Spiro Agnew, and B.F. Skinner Have Failed?" Adolescence, Fall 1978, pp. 375-92.

Eash, M.; Haertel, G.; Pascarella, E.; Conrad, K.; Iverson, B.; and Vispoel, W. Assessment of Multiple Outcomes: An Evaluation Research Study of a Compensatory Early Childhood Program. Paper presented at annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Boston, Mass., April 1980.

Education Week. "Limited Voucher Bill, Other Legislation Approved." Washington, D.C.: Editorial Projects in Education, August 21, 1985.

Entwistle, D., and Hayduck, L. Too Great Expectations: The Academic Outlook for Young Children. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.

Evans, Erma June. "Orienting Junior High Parents." The Personnel and Guidance Journal, Vol. 51, pp. 729-32.

Fotheringham, John, and Creal, Dorothy. "Family Socioeconomic and Educational-Emotional Characteristics as Predictors of School Achievement." Journal of Educational Research, Vol. 73, July/August 1980, pp. 311-17.

Gallup, George. The 15th Annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitude Toward the Public Schools. Phi Delta Kappan, Vol. 65, Summer 1983, pp. 33-47.

Glenn, Charles. Family Choice and Public Schools: A Report to the State Board of Education. Quincy, Mass.: Massachusetts Department of Education, 1986.

Goldhammer, K. Elementary Principals and Their Schools: Beacons of Brilliance and Potholes of Pestilence. Eugene, Ore.: University of Oregon, Center for the Advanced Study of Educational Administration, 1971.

Goodlad, John, and Klein, J. Behind the Classroom Door. Worthington, Ohio: Jones Publishing Co., 1970.

Gordon, Ira J. "What Does Research Say About the Effects of Parent Involvement for Supervision and Curriculum Development?" Paper presented at a meeting of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, San Francisco, Calif., March 1978.

Gordon, Ira; Olmstead, Patricia; Rubin, Robert; and True, Joan. Continuity Between Home and School: Aspects of Parent Involvement In Follow Through. Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina, 1978.

Henderson, Anne (ed.). Parent Participation-Student Achievement: The Evidence Grows. Occasional Paper. Columbia, Md.: National Committee for Citizens in Education, 1981.

Hegenbart, G. How Teachers and Parents Perceive Parental Involvement in Elementary Schools. Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois, 1980.

Herman, Joan, and Yeh, Jennie. "Some Effects of Parent Involvement in Schools." Paper presented at annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Boston, Mass., April 1980.

Hess, R., and Shipman, V. "Early Experience and the Socialization of Cognitive Modes in Children." Child Development, Vol. 36, 1965.

Hess, R.; Holloway, S.; Price, G.; and Dickson, W. "Family Environments and Acquisition of Reading Skills: Toward a More Precise Analysis." Paper presented at conference on the Family as a Learning Environment. Princeton, N.J.: Educational Testing Service, 1979.

Hightower, H. "Educational Decision-Making: The Involvement of Parent--Myth or Reality." Paper presented at the annual conference of the American Educational Research Association, Toronto, Ont., March 1978.

Irvine, David. Effects of Parent Involvement in a Prekindergarten Program on Children's Cognitive Performance. Albany, N.Y.: University of New York, 1979.

Jackson, R., and Stretch, H. "Perceptions of Parents, Teachers, and Administrators to Parent Involvement in Early Childhood Programs." The Alberta Journal of Educational Research, Vol. 22, 1976.

Jannsen, K. Matters of Choice: A Ford Foundation Report on Alternative Schools. New York, N.Y.: Ford Foundation, 1974.

Jencks, Christopher. Inequality: A Reassessment of the Effect of Family and Schools in America. New York, N.Y.: Basic Books, 1972.

Keeves, J.P. "Educational Environment and Student Achievement. Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research, 1972.

Keeves, J.P. "The Home, the School, and Achievement in Mathematics and Sciences." Science Education, Vol. 59, No. 4, pp. 439-60.

Kimmel, Carol. "Parental Involvement in Education." Paper presented at National Forum on Excellence in Education, Indianapolis, Ind., 1983.

Ladd, G.; Lange, G.; and Kienapple, K. "Parents, Teachers, and Competent Children." Paper presented at annual meeting of the Southern Association for Children Under Six. Biloxi, Miss., April 1981.

Langenbrunner, Mary, and Thornburg, K. R. "Attitude of Pre-School Director, Teachers, and Parents Toward Parent Involvement in the Schools." Reading Improvement, Vol. 17, 1980, pp. 286-91.

Lear, Rick. Alternative Program. State College, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University (unpublished study), 1984.

Lines, Patricia, and McGuire, Kent. Education Reform and Education Choice: Conflict and Accommodation. Denver, Colo.: Education Commission of the States, 1984.

Mayeske, George W. A Study of the Achievement of Our Nation's Students. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973.

Mosteller, Frederick, and Moynihan, Daniel (eds.). On Equality of Educational Opportunity. New York, N.Y.: Random House, 1972.

Mowry, Charles. Investigation of the Effects of Parent Participation in Head Start: Non-Technical Report. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1972.

Murnane, Richard. Family Choice in Pubic Education: Possibilities and Limitations. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Graduate School of Education, 1984.

National Consortium for Options in Public Education. "Directory of Alternative Public Schools." Changing Schools, 1972.

National School Boards Association. Alternative Schools: Research Report. Evanston, Ill.: National School Boards Association, 1976.

Nottleman, E. Parent-Child Interaction and Children's Achievement. Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois (unpublished dissertation), 1978.

Olmstead, P. "The Relationship of Program Participation and Parental Teaching Behavior with Children's Standardized Achievement Measures in Two Program Sites." Gainesville, Fla.: University of Florida (unpublished dissertation), 1977.

Olmstead, Patricia, and Jester, R. "Mother-Child Interaction in a Teaching Situation." Theory into Practice, Vol. 11, June 1972, pp. 163-70.

Parsons, J. The Development of Achievement Motivation (Report No. 117). Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan, Developmental Psychology Program, 1981.

Project on Alternatives in Education. Current Status of Schools of Choice in Public Secondary Education. Hempstead, N.Y.: Hofstra University, Project on Alternatives in Education, 1982.

Proshanskey, E. "Choice, Not Chance in New York City." Social Policy, September/October 1981.

The Rand Corporation . A Study of Alternatives in American Education, Vol. VII: Conclusions and Policy Implications. Santa Monica, Calif.

Raywid, Mary Anne. "The First Decade of Public School Alternatives." Phi Delta Kappan, Vol. 62, June 1981, pp. 733-35.

Raywid, Mary Anne. "Synthesis of Research on Schools of Choice." Educational Leadership, Vol. 41, No. 7, 1984a.

Raywid, Mary Anne. Family Choice Arrangements in Public Schools: A Review of the Literature. Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Education, 1984.

Rempson, J. School-Parent Programs in Depressed Urban Neighborhoods. New York, N.Y.: Praegen, 1967.

Schaefer, Earl. "Parents as Educators: Evidence From Cross-Sectional, Longitudinal, and Intervention Research." Young Children, Vol. 27, 1972, pp. 227-39.

Seginer, Rachel. "Parents' Educational Expectations and Children's Academic Achievements: A Literature Review." Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, Vol. 29, January 1983, pp. 1-23.

Smith, Vernon; Barr, Robert; and Burke, Dan. Alternatives in Education. Bloomington, Ind.: Phi Delta Kappa, 1976.

Tudor, Kay. "An Exploratory Study of Teacher Attitude and Behavior Toward Parent Education and Involvement." Educational Research Quarterly, Vol. 2, No. 2, Fall 1977, pp. 22-28.

Vernon, P.E. Intelligence: Heredity and Environment. San Francisco, Calif.: W.H. Freeman, 1979.

Wagenaar, Theodore. "School Achievement Level vis-a-vis Community Involvement and Support: An Empirical Assessment." Paper presented at annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, September 1977.

Warren, Constancia. "The Magnet School Boom: Implications for Desegregation." Equal Opportunity Review. ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education, Columbia University Teachers College, 1978.

Young C. Parents as Liaison Workers: An Evaluative Study of Title VII Programs. Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois, 1975.

THE MASSACHUSETTS EXPERIENCE WITH PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE

Prepared by Charles L. Glenn
Director
Bureau of Educational Opportunity
Massachusetts Department of Education

Massachusetts is frequently cited as a state which has given particular emphasis to parent choice in public education, and has backed that up with generous state funding. We are asked, How did that happen, what forms does it take, and how does it work?

The historical question would perhaps be of limited interest were it not for what it teaches us about some of the pitfalls of an unquestioning endorsement of "choice." After all, as we will see, the impetus to the development of a variety of forms of choice in Massachusetts was a state initiative to promote desegregation. This initiative, as it worked itself out, was as concerned to limit choice as it was to promote it; indeed, desegregation planning generally assumes -- incorrectly -- that "freedom of choice" must be sacrificed in the interest of educational justice and racial integration.

If the Massachusetts experience were relevant only to state desegregation initiatives, it would be useful only to those states which have made that a major priority. It has been useful to such states as Ohio and Illinois, New York and Pennsylvania, which have asked us to advise them on the development of their own equal educational opportunity strategies, and the "bottom line" for our efforts continues to be an unwavering commitment to equity and integration.

The assumption which has changed, as a result of our experience in Massachusetts, is that this can occur only through state mandates to school systems and through mandatory assignments for children.

It is because this assumption has changed, and we have continued to explore a variety of ways to achieve equity and integration while also promoting other educational goals, that the Massachusetts experience is relevant to states for which race desegregation is not an urgent issue, either because it has already been accomplished or because minority students are few.

What are the "other educational goals" which we have been pursuing as an essential part of our equity and integration effort? They include:

- o school-level initiatives for effective education;
- o responsiveness to parent hopes and concerns, through regular surveys, involvement in school planning, and choice of schools;
- o adaptation to the individual needs and capacities of all students -- not just those with special needs -- through diversified instruction;
- o development of distinctive, "flavorful" schools, committed to pleasing some parents very much rather than blandly trying not to displease any;
- o concern for the "non-academic" aspects of the curriculum, including the development of multi-cultural awareness and respect, character and citizenship;
- o support for the professionalism of staff, as expressed in the development and "marketing" of distinctive approaches to education; and

- offering educational options, such as "two-way bilingual education" and curriculum centered around the arts, which could not be made the standard for all students.

It may appear strange that such a broad educational agenda has developed under the guise of equity and integration, but a moment's reflection will show that it could not be otherwise. The effort to achieve educational equity is a process which leads inevitably far beyond the removal of barriers, just as the effort to achieve integration leads beyond bringing students together in the same place.

Aren't such educational objectives shared by many states and school systems for which race desegregation is not an issue? Of course, but the reality is that it was the crisis created by desegregation, in Massachusetts, which stimulated and continues to stimulate creativity and a willingness to implement new approaches to defining and delivering education.

Does this mean that the positive effects of public school diversity and parent choice can be experienced only in the context of desegregation? Not at all. Desegregation may have been the crisis to which Massachusetts was responding when we developed a variety of approaches to diversity and choice, but public education nationwide is facing a challenge of comparable seriousness: the wide-spread loss of confidence in our ability to respond to the demands of the times, to the concerns and convictions of parents, to the needs of students for those skills and those personal qualities which their own futures and that of our society require.

Diversity and choice are consistent with the operating style and sustaining principles of our pluralistic democracy, and it is high time that we in public education see that they need not conflict with our other commitments, to fairness, to opportunity, to racial reconciliation and respect, and to excellence of mind and heart.

It is possible to distinguish a succession of stages through which policies and programs related to choice have passed over the past twenty years.

- allowing choice--and supporting "positive" choice with free transportation
- preventing inappropriate or "negative" choice
- extending choice across school district boundaries
- expanding choice with new (and well-located) facilities
- encouraging choice with program development and recruitment
- universalizing choice by making it the basis for all school assignments

Each of these stages has left its imprint, explaining an aspect of the present arrangements (it would be an exaggeration to call them a system!) for choice in Massachusetts public schools. Reviewing the stages briefly and

noting the errors or limitations of each will be more instructive than any purely abstract discussion could be.

BLACK PARENTS CHOOSE A BETTER EDUCATION

More than twenty years ago black parents in Boston began to insist that the public schools were not responding adequately to the needs of their children, and indeed that they were being discriminated against in the allocation of resources, including the most competent staff. With the support of the NAACP, these concerns led to a major conflict with the School Committee, to two one-day boycotts of the public schools by thousands of black students, and to the passage of the state Racial Imbalance Law in 1965. While these controversies were going on, a growing number of black parents took advantage of an "open enrollment" policy which had been adopted in 1962 at the request of the NAACP to enroll their children in schools in white, middle-class sections of the city. By 1967 over 2,000 minority students were enrolled in majority-white schools under this policy.

Eight hundred of these students were taking part in "Operation Exodus," started by the parents themselves. Parents raised money for buses and other expenses in all of the ways familiar to the black church and community, as well as by gifts and grants from outside sympathizers. Eventually, in 1969, the State Legislature amended the Racial Imbalance Law to provide for the costs of transportation which promoted racial balance.

The impetus for this organized effort by Operation Exodus was the rejection, by the Boston School Committee, of a proposal by the superintendent to bus black students from overcrowded schools to predominantly white schools with available seats. The committee based its 1965 decision on opposition to "busing of children in any form for any reason, and under any conditions," an example of the political posturing which was to cost Boston so dearly in the years ahead. After all, only black children would have been transported under this proposal, and black parents and community leaders were asking that this occur!

The lesson of this first stage of the development of programs to support choice was that many inner city parents were willing to go to considerable trouble and even sacrifice to take advantage of choice, even if it was offered grudgingly, and that they were relatively sophisticated about what they are looking for. Operation Exodus would not enroll students in any predominantly white school with vacant seats; this organization of black parents made a careful assessment of the welcome and support which they believed that their children would receive, and enrolled students accordingly.

CONTROVERSY OVER INAPPROPRIATE CHOICE

Along with hundreds of choices by black parents seeking to educate their children in an integrated and educationally superior setting, there were hundreds of choices being made by white parents to take their children out of racially integrated schools. This was particularly the case with those who lived in neighborhoods experiencing racial change, for whom their "neighborhood schools" were no longer so appealing when they began to enroll a

number of black students. The "open enrollment" policy of the Boston School Committee (and similar policies in other cities) was used by these parents in a way which quickly made a number of schools in racially mixed areas become heavily minority in enrollment.

The chairman of the Boston School Committee admitted in late 1970 that nearly 900 white students had transferred "out of their mainly Negro neighborhood schools to mainly white schools elsewhere."

An analysis by my staff in early 1971 determined that 1,315 transfers were promoting integration, 967 were promoting segregation, and 3,625 were "neutral" in the sense that they were between two majority-white or majority-black schools. Even many of the latter were negative in their impact on integration, since students transferring from a 20 percent black school (in a racially changing area) to a school with no black students were hastening the segregation of the first school; such transfers had a "snowball effect." This was most notably the effect with several intermediate schools which became predominantly black though located in areas which were still residentially integrated, because of the transfer of white students out of their "neighborhood schools."

As a result of concern about the segregative effect of such transfers, the State Board adopted a policy that, in school systems where racial balance was a problem,

> Children may enroll in a school other than that of their assignment, on a space/grade available basis, if, and only if, such enrollment decreases racial imbalance. . . in his school of regular assignment and/or in the selected school.

Boston officials opposed and adamantly resisted to this policy, citing the "parental choice, as to school attendance, historically granted to families in changing neighborhoods." In other words, they conceded that it was their conscious practice to allow white parents to take their children out of integrated schools to enroll them in all-white schools.

Ironically, the Boston School Committee had been less accommodating in the early 1850s, when Yankee parents sought to transfer their children out of schools with a growing Irish enrollment. "Though some transfers were granted," historian Stanley Schultz observes, "members of the School Committee tried to discourage the practice," believing that it would have a negative effect on the education of the Irish children. "To further concentrate one ethnic and income group in individual schools appeared educationally unsound and morally unwise."

In 1971 the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination issued a ruling that open enrollment in Boston had been administered "in an arbitrary and discriminatory manner," and ordered the system to operate the program in such a way that it would increase the information and options available to minority parents while reducing the isolation of minority students.

The negative impact of many transfers in the early 1970s and the refusal of the Boston School Committee to impose limits on them were among the main factors which led to a State Board decision in 1971 to withhold funding, and to the Federal District Court ruling in 1974 that the segregation of the Boston schools was fostered by official actions. The existence of similar policies and practices in other Massachusetts cities had a similar effect, as we found when we worked with them to determine why certain schools became "racially identifiable." Whether by court order or by local school committee policy, controls have now been placed on transfers which would have a negative effect on racial integration.

In retrospect, I regret that our concern to check an abuse -- and it was an abuse -- took so little account of the concerns of parents and of their quite understandable desire to exercise some control of the education of their children. There were racial motivations, but our subsequent experience suggests that it might have been possible to increase acceptance of integration by providing opportunities to choose among integrated schools. It was in part the helpless and powerless feeling which many white parents developed as their neighborhoods and their schools changed which created a panic and even, in some, a rage. Expanded choice, without compromise on the importance of integration, could have increased their sense of being in control.

It may be that the demagogery of some Boston elected officials and the rigidity of the school system would have made impossible a more flexible approach, but if we could do it over I would press strongly for strategies to stabilize the racially transitional areas with some educational options.

One lesson of this second stage was that unrestricted choice can lead to racial separation and neighborhood instability; choice is not an unmixed blessing, and public policy should seek to harness it to positive ends and restrain it from harmful effects.

Another lesson, learned only in retrospect, is that the attempt to avoid such problems by an exclusively negative control on transfers produces other negative consequences. Blocked in their desire to transfer among public schools, parents simply withdraw their children, or move, or falsify their addresses, and thus reclaim the freedom which we are seeking to take away.

With this "freedom," as with so many, there is a certain ambiguity. It is a freedom to discriminate against people of color, to frustrate their attempts to seek integrated schools for their children by abandoning those schools; it is also a freedom to make important decisions about one's own children, to seek for them the best available school. The latter is essential to our sense of parental responsibility and the demands of love, while the former goes contrary to our deepest values as a society.

Fifteen years ago the only way we could think of to protect the rights of minority children was to seek to limit the freedom of white parents to make decisions about their own children. Even today we start from the assumption that there can be no absolute right to attend any public school, without regard to the impact of that decision upon the rights of others or upon those

goals and principles which we have adopted as a society, but we have learned that this is not a "zero-sum game." With sound planning and thoughtful implementation it is possible to increase the options available to white parents without doing so at the expense of minority parents and students.

EXTENDING CHOICE ACROSS BARRIERS

The third stage in the development of approaches to choice in Massachusetts public education was the attempt to reduce the significance of some of the governmental barriers which limit the exercise of choice, especially by parents whose poverty or race limits their choice of community.

The Metco Program, under which minority students from inner-city schools attend suburban schools on a voluntary basis, was in a sense the logical next step after Operation Exodus demonstrated how strongly minority parents wanted the opportunity to enroll their children in "better" schools. Exodus allowed them to break out of the ghetto to other sections of Boston where better education seemed to be available, but still came up against the city limits. Metco, which goes beyond those limits, has been a considerable and long-term success.

Metco began operation in 1966-67, with 200 students attending schools in seven suburban Boston systems; by 1971-72 there were nearly 1,600 students, and for the past decade the numbers have hovered just over 3,000, in forty suburban Boston and Springfield systems.

Starting in the 1969-70 school year the state has paid all expenses of this program, including transportation, the cost of instruction in the host school, and support staff in each suburban community. Student placements (except for the small Springfield area program) are made by the non-profit Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity, a black-run organization whose large staff is also funded by the state. Annual appropriations are running over $11 million, with no apparent slackening of legislative support for this program, while there is a substantial waiting list of minority parents who wish to enroll their children.

One lesson of this third stage of the extension of choice was that municipal boundaries need not restrict educational choice. This means that it is possible to make progress toward "equal educational opportunity" without sacrificing the virtues of local decision-making for some form of metropolitan governance structure. Students can enroll across municipal boundaries, and state funds can support the full cost of educating urban students, without basic structural changes.

The Metco experience over nearly twenty years has also taught us how essential it is that appropriate support be provided for urban minority students -- even those whose families are thoroughly middle class -- enrolled in suburban schools. Two principles have guided the state's annual review of each system's plan to participate in the program: Metco students must be treated in every respect as though they were resident students, and there must be at least one staff member whose full-time responsibility it is to provide support and advocacy for them. It may appear that there is some contradiction

between these principles, but it is a deliberate ambiguity, a determination to combine the best features of "belonging" and special treatment. And it works; by all accounts and standards, the Metco program has been a solid success for the great majority of the students.

A third lesson which we have learned is that sometimes an ad hoc arrangement can in fact serve quite well in the absence of the sort of comprehensive policy which would satisfy the policy planner. There are severe limitations on Metco: it relies too exclusively upon annual appropriations, it operates "one way" with only minority students able to transfer, it does nothing to strengthen the urban schools and indeed removes many of the students (and parents) who might help to improve them. These are all problems, and we have made attempts over the years to deal with each of them, but meanwhile the program rolls quietly on, with hundreds of lives changed and a few graduates now beginning to work as staff. If we had insisted on a comprehensive metropolitan plan (and several years and a great deal of money were expended in the effort to develop one) before beginning to serve students, we would undoubtedly still be talking!

EXPANDING CHOICE

Simply allowing parents to take advantage of available seats in out-of-district schools can have only a limited effect; it is contingent upon the accidents of student population in residential districts. Since the decline in birthrate has impacted primarily white and middle-class areas, while some inner-city schools are bursting at the seams with children (including those of new migrants and refugees), a "space available" policy tends to allow movement in only one direction.

This creates two problems of equity or fairness. One is that the "burden" of movement rests exclusively on minority students, as in the Exodus and Metco programs described above, or in the voluntary transfer programs which have been implemented in Chicago and other cities as a way of creating at least a measure of integration in white areas without "bussing" white students. The other problem is that the sorts of educational options and magnet programs which will be described below can only be developed in schools in white areas, since only there is space available to attract "magnet" students. Thus such schools are strengthened while those in minority areas are not.

State law in Massachusetts helps to address this problem by providing very substantial financial support -- originally 65 percent, currently 90 percent of the cost of construction, including interest -- for school facilities (or additions to existing facilities) which provide the additional space needed to permit voluntary transfers which increase racial integration. This provision also applies to new facilities which are so located that they will draw a "naturally" integrated enrollment, though in most cases there is a voluntary component to such plans as well.

Under this construction provision more than $400 million in school construction and renovation has been approved over the past twenty years. Note that this affects not only "magnet schools," but also many schools which are enrolled on a semi-voluntary basis, as in Boston. Thus, for example, the

Lee and Mattahunt Schools in Boston, though not magnets, draw their white enrollment partly under a new provision of the assignment policy which allows students to choose among a number of options.

Another way to increase the capacity available for voluntary transfers is through adjusting attendance districts to reduce the number of students assigned on the basis of residence to a particular school. This was an important aspect of the early stages of developing magnet options in Worcester.

A third way to increase available capacity is to relocate programs to which students are assigned on the basis of their educational needs. In several Massachusetts cities, there was an undue concentration of the special needs and bilingual programs in inner-city schools. By locating these programs elsewhere it was possible to make space for increased enrollment.

These last measures must be used with sensitivity; it would not be appropriate to place an increased burden upon the students who require such programs. Too often they have been displaced again and again to suit the convenience of the school system, and we have been concerned to assure that whatever decisions are made will bring them solid benefits. In one city, for example, discussion with Hispanic parents and community leaders revealed a concern on their part that students requiring bilingual programs were forced to change schools every two years. A facility was identified which, though further from the concentration of Hispanic population, could offer a K-6 sequence of instruction in the same building. This was accepted as a benefit worth the additional transportation required. As a result, one of the schools out of which the bilingual program was moved was able to develop a highly successful magnet program to attract white students and thus become racially integrated.

In the case of substantially separate special needs programs, it is usually the case that students are drawn from a wide area, and the location in one facility or another does not represent a hardship. All too often, we have found, such programs were placed in inner-city schools simply because the more influential parents elsewhere objected to accommodating them in "their" schools. A move to another facility, with assurances against further moves for a number of years, can be a net gain for these students as well.

These measures to expand the space available for school choice illustrate the importance of sound planning and active efforts to make its benefits available to as many students as possible. School systems have always made decisions about where schools will be located and who will attend them; increased parent choice is not achieved by administrators simply folding their hands and letting it happen.

ENCOURAGING CHOICE WITH PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND RECRUITMENT

The first "magnet schools" in Massachusetts were developed in the late 1960s as a means of attracting white students to inner-city schools. In February 1967 the Boston School Committee, under pressure from the State Board, proposed construction of the school which would become William Monroe Trotter, in Roxbury. This school would be built much larger than the

school which it was replacing, with space held for white students who would be recruited from across the city. As a result of intensive publicity after the school opened, the Trotter was able to develop a waiting list of white students by 1970-71, and has remained over-subscribed ever since.

A similar approach was developed in New Bedford, where a small inner-city school in a Cape Verdean neighborhood, the Green School, was threatened with closing in order to satisfy state demands that "racial imbalance" be eliminated. Parents launched a successful effort to attract white children from a section of the city where many liberal college faculty lived.

Several other magnet schools were set up in the early 1970s, and when the Massachusetts legislature amended the Racial Imbalance Law in 1974, a new section was added to authorize funding for magnet schools and programs (the appropriation for this purpose is currently $5,050,000). Over the subsequent ten years a variety of magnet school options were developed in ten Massachusetts cities, with others actively exploring this possibility. Specifics on magnet school operating in the 1985-86 school years are provided in the following section.

A great deal could be -- and has been -- written about magnet schools; here I will mention only a few of my conclusions after fifteen years of overseeing these schools in Massachusetts, fourteen of them as a "magnet school parent"!

- o Magnet schools are not necessarily the same as "alternative schools." The latter are generally of two types: schools developed to attract highly sophisticated parents seeking a more "child centered" program than is offered by most public schools, with a variety of special enrichment activities, and schools developed to meet the needs of students -- often poor and minority students -- who for various reasons cannot handle the structured expectations of an ordinary public school and require a different kind of environment, typically with a high staff ratio. The first is an alternative to private schools, the second to dropping out of or disrupting a public school.

  We have operated a few "alternative schools," as described above, with magnet school funds. For example, the Cambridge Alternative Program (now called Graham/Parks) started as a school appealing to parents wishing a child-centered program in the spirit of the late 1960s, while the Alternative Junior High School in Springfield was a response to the needs of disruptive students. While such options are certainly possible (and even advisable) under a magnet school plan, they are not central to what our magnet schools are all about.

- o Neither are magnet schools intended, in Massachusetts, to be "elite schools." There are a few selective magnet schools, the three high schools in Boston admission to which is by competitive examination, but these are the exceptions. Even in these cases -- which include the venerable Boston Latin School -- magnet school funding is provided only because there is a court-ordered admission policy intended to increase minority enrollment, and the magnet funds are used only to

provide the support services which many of the minority students need to meet the high academic expectations for which their earlier schooling had not prepared them.

- We try to prevent magnet schools from becoming "super schools" through the provision of so many extra resources that it is unfair to students attending non-magnet schools. We stress that magnet schools should not be "better," in the sense that other schools are complacently allowed to be worse, but different. Some are different by offering very distinctive ways of organizing the entire program, as in the cases of the Arts and City schools in Lowell, while others are different because of the educational philosophy which (in theory, at least) informs every aspect of school life. Thus some magnet schools in Worcester identify themselves to prospective parents as "traditional" or "child-centered."

- This does not mean that magnet schools should stress their distinctive features at the expense of effective instruction in those elements of the curriculum which are common to all schools. We have been concerned to avoid the impression that magnet school grants were "funding for grooviness," and have recently instituted an annual recognition program which seeks to identify those schools which are most effective at educating "ordinary" urban students.

- A corollary of this principle is our preference -- in most cases -- for magnet schools which do not draw all of their students city-wide, but which are "ordinary" district schools serving students who attend for no other reason than place of residence, as well as other students who are volunteers, and which educate the two groups of students together in every respect.

  The advantage of this approach is that the energy and continual effort to improve instruction which are characteristic of schools where parents have a choice are made available also to children whose parents would not take advantage of such a choice. In any population, only those parents who are more actively engaged with the education of their children are likely to select a magnet school, and this is often used as an argument that such schools tend to create inequities among students. By distributing those "choosing" (and thus influential) parents among as many schools as possible, benefits are created for children whose parents have not chosen and are not likely to be actively involved in strengthening the school.

  In addition, we do not encourage "magnet programs" within schools which serve a select group of students under substantially separate conditions, though we have funded such programs in one school each in Brockton and New Bedford. My evaluation of the impact of such options in Chicago concluded that -- though better than nothing -- they tended to create inequitable special opportunities and to evade real integration.

- o Experience has shown that certain measures are important to the successful development and implementation of a program of magnet schools. Last May I spelled out twelve of these measures in a "discussion paper" on student recruitment for Boston administrators, and the paper subsequently appeared in Equity and Choice I, 3 (Spring 1985) and in Report No. 5 to the Federal District Court.

UNIVERSALIZING CHOICE AS THE BASIS FOR ALL ASSIGNMENTS

The Student Desegregation Plan ordered by Judge W. Arthur Garrity in May 1975 made a process of school applications the basis of assignments in Boston. Each year since the parent or guardian of every student has been given the opportunity to indicate up to three school preferences, and assignments have sought so far as possible to respect these preferences. It has not generally been realized that the great majority of Boston parents who take the trouble to return an application receive one of their choices. This has in part been possible because magnet schools have served roughly one student in four (one in two at the high school level), and because the location of schools assures that many parents can be given an assignment to the nearest school consistent with the desegregation mandate.

According to an analysis of the assignments for September 1983, 36,752 Boston students had received their first choice assignments for grades K-12, with another 2,832 receiving second or third choices. Eighty-nine percent of the parents who indicated choices were given one of them. Another 4,921 students, or 8.7 percent of the total enrollment of the system, did not receive one of their three choices (many only indicated one choice), while no applications were returned for 8,766 students. Most of the latter were reassigned to their present schools or (if at a transition point) to their district school, while less than 3 percent were assigned to city-wide high schools.

We observed in our February 1984 Report on Desegregation in Massachusetts that "a variety of procedural requirements, developed to assure impartiality, to prevent anticipated abuses, and to meet other objectives either of the Court or of the school system, have created a popular impression that the Plan is rigid and irrational, and could be replaced by a simpler method of assigning and transferring students. Monitoring of the assignment system over the past year confirms its complexity and impartiality, and suggests that changes should be made only with great care and a good understanding of their possible unanticipated consequences."

Such changes were made, with approval of the court, in February 1985. In two of Boston's eight residential districts a new method of assigning students was implemented on an experimental basis. White students were offered guaranteed places in any of a list of schools in black neighborhoods, while black students were offered such places in schools in white neighborhoods. More choices were offered than had previously been available, in other words, but there was not a choice of attending a school which would not be desegregated.

A full assessment of this new approach to assignments will be provided in our April 1986 Report on Desegregation in Massachusetts, but review of the process last Spring and of the enrollment this Fall suggest that it was a substantial success.

Another change was the designation of twenty-one schools city-wide for a "recruitment incentive plan" which allowed them to recruit students from outside of their assigned attendance areas. In most cases very little was done to implement this program last Spring, but a substantial part of the state desegregation funding to Boston for 1985-86 is committed to a major effort of recruitment for 1986-87 assignments.

The other Massachusetts city which has made choice the central mechanism of student assignments is Cambridge. Whereas in Boston the choices -- until this year -- were only between one of the city-wide magnet schools and a designated district school, in Cambridge parents are able to indicate a preference for any school at the appropriate grade level. A full discussion of the Cambridge Plan has been prepared by my colleague Michael Alves (see below).

CONCLUSIONS

Approximately four out of five of the minority students in Massachusetts and one out of five of the white students are enrolled in school systems which offer parents the opportunity to make choices about the public school which their children will attend, and which foster such choices through deliberate efforts to increase the distinctiveness of various schools and to provide accurate parent information.

This does not mean, of course, that all of these students attend a school which their parents have chosen; after all, a number of cities have only one high school and any choice which is exercised is among programs within the school.

What it does indicate is that choice has become an accepted policy in school systems which represent a significant share of the public school enrollment in Massachusetts. In fifteen urban school districts there are planning efforts currently afoot, funded with state desegregation funds, to extend the choices already available. The superintendents of most of these districts, chaired by Worcester's John Durkin, meet on a regular basis to coordinate their efforts and to provide mutual support. This Spring they will be hosting a conference on "Diversity and Choice in Public Education."

To a remarkable extent, then, family choice has become a normal aspect of the organization of public education in Massachusetts. It has not done so because of a "master plan" or one-time policy decision, but in a succession of incremental steps which have been described briefly above. Each step has demonstrated some of the virtues of public school choice, just as it has made us aware of problems which such choice may cause. This incremental process has undoubtedly preserved us from making serious mistakes with unanticipated negative consequences.

The landmarks in this process have been:

- o the direct action by black parents to make choices for their children, by seeking available seats in Boston and other cities and then in suburban districts;
- o the insistence by the State Board that parent choices be supported when helpful to integration and prevented when harmful;
- o the development, on a pilot basis, of a few urban magnet schools;
- o the generous financial support, by the Massachusetts legislature, of construction, transportation, urban/suburban transfers, and magnet schools;
- o the shift, in state equity strategy, from mandatory to voluntary approaches, with no relaxation in the standard applied to their outcomes; and
- o the enthusiastic adoption, by parents, staff, and superintendents in most Massachusetts cities, of the idea of enhanced family choice as the basis not only for equity and integration but also for educational improvement.

WHAT REMAINS TO BE DONE?

The strong support for family choice in Massachusetts could lead to any of the following new steps:

- o The development of systems of school choice (as opposed to the present haphazard transfer arrangements) in communities with few minority students; though desegregation gave the impetus to such systems, their educational benefits have been so solid that there seems no reason to limit them to a few communities.
- o The continuing differentiation of public schools in those communities which are consciously promoting family choice. Every public school is not good for every child, nor can any school meet the expectations of every parent. We can become much bolder than we have been so far in encouraging a wide diversity of philosophy and approach among public schools.
- o "Making the City a Magnet Again," to borrow the title of a paper which I gave at a national conference some years ago. Suburban schools will never be as distinctive and flavorful as urban schools could be, drawing upon the cultural, institutional, and human resources of a city. Despite some timid experiments in the late 1970s, there has not yet been a serious attempt in Massachusetts to draw suburban students into urban schools.

PUTTING CHOICE TO WORK FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

Prepared by Charles L. Glenn, Director
Bureau of Equal Educational Opportunity
Massachusetts Department of Education

Three principles are absolutely basic to discussion of school choice -- or any other aspect of educational policy.

The first is that the primary responsibility for a child's development, including education, rests with the parents. "The child is not the mere creature of the state," as the Supreme Court observed in its 1925 ruling in Pierce v. Society of Sisters. This may seem obvious, but there have been governments in other nations that have asserted or acted upon the principle that the child does belong to the state.

We have public schools to make it possible for parents, whatever their circumstances and their own ability, to meet this responsibility. Since some parents, for one reason or another, do not meet their obligations, we protect children by requiring that they be educated, but not that they be educated in a public school if the parents are able to provide an equivalent alternative.

The second principle is that, because we consider education so significant that we are prepared to require it, we as a society have a special responsibility to assure that it is provided fairly. This means that we seek to provide the best possible education for each student. This cannot mean providing the same instruction and support for every student, but rather a diversity that responds to diverse needs and capacity, and that overcomes, as much as possible, any disabilities that result from race, poverty, or handicap.

The third principle is that there are certain things that every American child should learn, including various skills and essential knowledge about our common heritage. Here we should not go so far as Horace Mann and his fellow reformers, who wished the schools to encourage the same values in every student; that would infringe upon the rights of parents. We as a people will always differ on many things, but those differences should not be founded upon ignorance of each other.

The structure of education, the ways we deliver educational services, should serve and be directly subject to these principles. No aspect of the present structure of education should be considered sacrosanct, but all should be open to testing by these three standards.

WHEN SCHOOL CHOICE HURTS PUBLIC EDUCATION

It is unfortunately true that many of the policies under which such choice has operated around the country have worked directly against one or more of the principles stated above. These effects have led many supporters of public education -- including the National Education Association -- to oppose the extension of choice. They have been right, given their understanding of what parent choice involves, and it is important to acknowledge these concerns before arguing that all of them can be met by a well-designed policy and program.

There are many negative effects that can be associated with "open enrollment" or unrestricted choice:

- Two classes of schools may be created, one elite and the other regarded and functioning as second-rate.

- o Racial and social class separation may increase.
- o Sophisticated parents may obtain an unfair advantage for their children.
- o Additional resources may be unfairly distributed -- or scarce resources diverted.
- o Many parents may become confused, frustrated, and more apathetic than before.
- o Top-down decisions about the special identities or clienteles of particular schools may further reduce the professional responsibility of school staff.
- o In an attempt to "catch the eye" of parents, attention may be diverted from the basics of education to "grooviness."

We have found ways to respond to each of these concerns in our public school systems of choice in seven Massachusetts cities -- including our three largest -- and we are developing such systems of choice in six others. Without going into details, the answer is a careful orchestration of the available choices and how recruitment and assignments are carried out.

A program of choice that will enhance parent responsibility for educational decisions and promote equity, without sacrificing the common learning that is so vital to a functioning democracy requires constant fine-tuning, constant attention, and adjustment.

We call this "conditional choices" as contrasted with "open enrollment." As wide a range of educational choices as possible is made available to parents, in response to their expressed preferences and concerns, with three important responsibilities reserved to a central coordinating office:

1) providing current and accurate information on all available choices;
2) making assignments that respect parent choices as much as possible, given the constraint of assuring equity and other essential goals; and
3) continually developing and modifying the range of options available so that as high a proportion of parents as possible obtain their choices, subject to these constraints.

In effect, this central function involves responsibility for assuring that everyone has an equal chance and equal information, that the benefits to every student are maximized, and that the overall goals of the system continue to be met through a greatly diversified delivery system.

WHEN SCHOOL CHOICE HELPS PUBLIC EDUCATION

Although we share the concerns that others have expressed about the effects of choice, having to do essentially with equity and with national

unity, we are convinced from experience that a system of "conditional choices" can avoid the negative consequences and have powerful positive results. "Conditional choices" can put the power of choice to work for public education. Following are some of the reasons we must not fail to face the challenge of choice:

- o Choice is being exercised to a greater extent in education, but in ways that weaken rather than strengthen public education in its traditional role as the common school of the nation. Parents who have options and resources continue to send their children to suburban schools instead of urban schools, and to non-public instead of urban or suburban public schools. It may be that those who feel most strongly about choice today are black parents living in central cities; certainly the long waiting lists for our urban/suburban Metco program in Boston suggests that. It is, by and large, those least in a position to exercise choice who desire it most strongly; the 1985 Gallup Poll on education found that minority respondents favor education vouchers by 59 percent to 26 percent, central city residents by 53 percent to 32 percent, and respondents between eighteen and twenty-nine (the prime child-bearing ages) by 55 percent to 31 percent. Shouldn't public education, with its professed special concern for these groups, find ways to respond to their desire for more choices about their children's education?

- o "Conditional choices" strengthen initiative and accountability at the schoolhouse level, helping staff develop that shared sense of mission so essential to an effective school. Teachers and principals gain increased freedom of action to express their professionalism to the benefit of the students by pleasing some parents very much rather than anxiously avoiding offending anyone. Contrary to school improvement strategies that seek to impose additional constraints and requirements, "conditional choice" elicits the energy and leadership essential to real school improvement from those in the schoolhouse.

- o Parent satisfaction increases markedly under a system of "conditional choices," as parents are able to have a direct influence on the type of school environment and educational strategy their children are exposed to through simply choosing the school that most corresponds to their own concerns. The apathy or debilitating conflicts that characterize so many efforts to bring parents into school governance are avoided; parents "vote with their [children's] feet," and then tend to be strong supporters of the schools they have chosen. In a pluralistic democracy it is essential for public institutions to find ways of accommodating diversity wherever possible, and thus to gain wholehearted support for those common convictions that must bind us together.

- o "Conditional choices," by allowing public schools to become more diverse, make it possible to effectively match the needs of each student. It has been necessary for too many parents -- and indeed for public school authorities -- to place students in non-public schools because the climate, disciplinary practices, or course offerings of the standard public school could not meet their needs.

- Teacher satisfaction is increased significantly in schools in which teachers have worked together to define the educational mission and the ground rules of daily life together. Teachers feel that they have increased their control over their work, for the benefit of rather than at the expense of the students, and they enjoy the reduced conflict in a school where staff and parents are in agreement. To the extent that they develop specializations as a result of the increased diversity of schools, they enhance their own professionalism.

For all of these reasons, "conditional choices" work powerfully for school improvement, enhanced morale on all sides, and increased public support for public education.

PROVIDING DATA AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS
IN ANSWER TO TWELVE QUESTIONS RAISED BY THE TASK FORCE

Prepared by Evans Clinchy
Senior Field Association
Institute for Responsive Education
Boston, Massachusetts
with
Elisabeth Allen Cody
Owen Heleen
Mary Westropp

INTRODUCTION

What This Report Is And How the Study Was Conducted

This report has been prepared at the request of the staff of the Task Force on Parent Involvement and Choice of the National Governors' Association, chaired by Gov. Richard Lamm of Colorado.

The authors were asked to assist the task force by gathering information and making policy recommendations concerning twelve questions that emerged from testimony given at task force hearings in Denver, Colorado, and Washington, D.C.

We were asked to gather, within a relatively short time period, as much information as we could -- primarily from people out in the field in local public school districts and state departments of education -- to provide some answers to the twelve questions, answers based on the actual experience of people operating choice programs within the public schools.

In conducting this part of the study, we held direct telephone interviews with some fifteen school districts operating magnet schools and systems of choice. The range included large urban districts (Philadelphia, San Diego, St. Louis, Cleveland, Dallas, St. Paul, Pittsburgh, Cincinatti, Rochester, Baltimore, Indianapolis), smaller city districts (Newburgh, N.Y., Sweetwater Union High School District, Calif.), one community school district in New York City (District Four), and one suburban district (Acton, Mass.).

In addition to these direct interviews, we were able to draw upon our recent and continuing contacts with a variety of school districts around the country that operate schools of choice (such as Buffalo, Chicago, and Norwalk, Bridgeport, Stamford, and Hartford, Connecticut) and especially with the fourteen desegregating school districts in Massachusetts with whom the Institute for Responsive Education (IRE) is in constant touch (including Boston, Worcester, Lowell, Fall River, New Bedford, Brockton, Springfield, and Holyoke).

We also were able to draw upon contacts (and in several cases conduct direct interviews) with personnel in state departments of education or with persons having direct knowledge of such states, including Massachusetts, New York, Washington, and Minnesota. Dr. Charles Glenn, director of the Bureau of Equal Educational Opportunity in the Massacusetts State Department of Education, has in particular been a constant source of information, inspiration, and support.

We also interviewed spokespersons for the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association.

In most cases, these informants in their interviews responded to a questionnaire developed for the study (see Appendix B). In the process of developing this questionnaire, we reorganized the order of the original twelve questions by grouping them into the three categories dealt with in Section II below: questions dealing primarily with the role of states; questions dealing

with both states and local districts; and questions pertaining primarily to local districts.

We were asked then to develop, out of this information and out of our own considerable experience in assisting local districts and state departments of education to develop magnet schools and systems of choice and equity, a set of policy recommendations for the task force to consider.

What this report is, therefore, is our best attempt to provide documented answers to the twelve questions raised by the task force and to set forth the policy recommendations implicit in all of the information gathered and all of our experience in this field.

The views expressed in this report and the recommendations made are the views and recommendations of the author of the report. They do not constitute the official views of the Institute or its board.

FINDINGS IN ANSWER TO SPECIFIC QUESTIONS AND IRE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING EACH QUESTION

Questions relating directly to the role of Governors, state legislatures, and state departments of education.

What is the role of Governors, state legislators, and state departments of education in encouraging and assisting choice in public education?

Findings

The national experience with parental choice in this country over the past fifty years or so suggests several generalizations:

1. The most obvious is the fact that the standard system of public education established by virtually every state in the union -- and therefore the typical American public school system operated by those states -- is by its very nature, by its established structure and methods of organization and operation, simply not designed to provide either parent or professional choice. Indeed, it can be said that most public school systems, given their established habits of operation, are and must inevitably be uncomfortable with the idea of diversity and choice.

   In virtually every state in the nation, the primary method of assigning students to schools has historically been by geographic residence. Students have been -- and for the most part still are -- expected to attend the elementary school and, in most cases, the secondary school established for them in the neighborhood area of their local school district.

   The primary exception to this rule, until 1954, was the maintenance of de facto segregated schools, most particularly in the South, in which case both minority and nonminority children often were bused

out of their neighborhoods to attend their separate and unequal schools (in Alabama, for instance, the total amount of mandatory busing went down as a result of desegregation).

Equality of educational opportunity -- in so far as attention has been paid to it -- has historically been handled by the attempt to provide the same resources and the same standardized, centrally determined curriculum and quality of teaching in all of a district's schools -- and more recently by providing "compensatory" education programs for poor and minority children within those "neighborhood" schools.

In a like manner, teachers generally have been assigned to schools -- and most still are -- as a result of their position on a centrally dictated list, and then most often by seniority in the system. While most teacher contracts contain a provision for voluntary transfer, such transfers usually are granted by seniority, irrespective of a teacher's fitness for a particular school or educational program.

2. The second generalization that can be made is that the typical state system of public education and therefore the typical American school system -- again almost without exception -- has provided a limited degree of diversity among schools and a measure of parent or teacher choice only as a result of outside pressure or the outright intervention of non-"educational" forces in society.

   The two most powerful of these forces have been the public (and most often parent and student) demand during the 1950s and 1960s for "alternative" schools and the Supreme Court's Brown decision in 1954 outlawing segregated schools.

   The combination of these two powerful forces -- and especially the constitutional requirement to desegregate our larger urban school systems -- has over the past thirty years compelled an increasing number of local school districts to offer parents and students (and therefore in many instances teachers as well) a limited range of different kinds of alternative or magnet schools from which they can choose the one they believe suits them best.

   In some cases (notably in the metropolitan areas of Boston, Hartford, Milwaukee, St. Louis, Indianapolis, and Minneapolis) the federal courts and/or state courts have ordered either mandatory or voluntary interdistrict metropolitan desegregation plans that involve parents and students voluntarily choosing to attend schools outside their local district.

   Although no one knows the precise number of such schools of choice in this country, experts such as Mary Anne Raywid at Hofstra University have estimated that there are well over 10,000 such "magnet" schools, "alternative" schools, or "optional" schools now

in existence in public school systems throughout the nation. And this number appears to be growing each day.

The overwhelming success of these schools of choice is attested by the fact that in most of the school systems offering such schools the number of parents who wish their children to be enrolled in them far exceeds the number of available spaces. In Buffalo, for instance, there are this year 10,000 applications for only 2,000 available seats in the city's magnets. In Pittsburgh, where students are admitted to magnets on a first-come, first-served basis, parents have camped out on the grounds of magnet schools up to a week to assure their children a place in the school.

And perhaps most significantly, in these and other cities, parents of children in private and parochial schools are moving their children back into the public system at the rate of about 1,000 students a year.

And almost every school system contacted for this study (as well as such national research reports as that conducted by Rolf Blank for James H. Lowry Associates in 1983) report that academic achievement in nonselective "magnet" schools of choice consistently outruns the achievement levels of nonmagnet schools.

It is thus interesting to note that despite all of this growing evidence (including the results of recent Gallup polls) showing that diversity and choice within our public schools is something that parents want, and despite the fact that parents clearly believe that the schools they choose are providing their children with at least a "better" if not a truly "excellent" education (why else would they choose them?), not a single one of the national reports issued over the past few years has proposed such diversity and choice as a major educational reform or even as a primary method of achieving "educational excellence."

What most of the reports have recommended and what most states have proceeded to do is to attempt to impose by legislative fiat upon all parents and all students a set of uniform "higher" or "tougher" academic standards and uniform curricula that all schools must follow in order to achieve "excellence."

3. A third generalization that can be made about the typical state system of public education and its local school districts and individual schools is that while there is a great deal of talk about the need for parents to be involved in and support their local public schools, the vast majority of local systems and individual schools are designed and operated in a fashion that effectively excludes parents from any meaningful voice in the education of their children.

Clearly, if a parent has no opportunity to decide what school a child will attend or what kind of schooling the child will receive, that parent is rendered to a large extent powerless to control (or even to "participate" or to be "involved" in) the educational life of the child. In this sense, we should not be wondering why so many parents appear to be apathetic about their public schools but why so many parents still make the attempt to be involved and to participate against heavy if not insurmountable odds.

Even in many situations where a degree of choice has been provided through alternative and magnet schools, parents have not been involved in deciding what those choices will be. In most cases, these decisions have been made either by some external agency such as a federal court or by the local school board and central administration.

In a few instances (notably Lowell and Worcester, Massachusetts, and Buffalo) there has been intensive community and parent involvement in these decisions, including actual surveys of parents to determine the different kinds of schooling parents want for their children. Such genuine involvement of parents has in those communities had a remarkable impact on parental, and general citizen, enthusiasm for and continued participation in the public schools.

But even in many "choice" situations, once the parents have made their choices, parental involvement is often limited to the usual public school activities of PTA meetings and fundraising. By and large they are still not involved in making the fundamental decisions about what the curriculum will be, who the staff of the school will be, how the funds allocated to the school will be spent, and so on. Decisions concerning these matters are largely believed to be the responsibility of the school system's professional administrators. Again, under circumstances such as these, why should we expect parents to respond with eagerness to any invitations or exhortations that they become "involved" or "participate" in their children's schooling?

And, it is very necessary to point out, our teachers are very much in the same position as parents. They, too, most often have little or no say about the kind of schooling they will be able to practice, much less what school they will be able to teach in. And they, all too often, also have little or nothing to say about how their school will be run, what the curriculum will be, how money will be spent, and so on. And we then wonder why teaching is not an honored profession and why it is so hard to keep good people in it and to attract good new people.

4. A final generalization that can be made (based upon the first three) is that, although the rapidly growing number of schools of choice have proved to be immensely popular and successful, only a handful of states and local school districts have as yet accepted -- or have

yet even begun seriously to explore -- the idea that deliberately creating a diverse range of schools from which parents (and teachers) may choose, whether or not desegregation is involved, is a vast improvement over the traditional method of arbitrarily assigning children to school on the basis of residence.

(We must, of course, always keep in mind when talking about choice that one quite legitimate choice that parents will always be able to ask for and in many cases will still be able to make is to send their child or children to the "neighborhood" school down the street, even though that school may have become a "magnet" or specialized school of choice and is no longer the old, standardized neighborhood school they once knew).

Nor have many states or individual school systems seriously attempted to explore ways that parents (and teachers) can be involved in deciding what the choices will be or individual school governance systems that include parents and teachers in decisionmaking about the general operations of the individual schools they have chosen.

A few states -- notably Minnesota, Colorado, and South Dakota -- have begun to explore this process, or at least the interdistrict choice part of this process, so far with mixed and limited results (these legislative attempts are discussed in greater detail later in this report). And even a state such as Vermont that has historically permitted local school districts to allow children to attend either public schools in other districts or even to attend nearby private schools, has done so with great reluctance and only as a result of pressure from local districts that see such an arrangement as a better fiscal (and sometimes educational) alternative to providing such schooling within their own boundaries.

What we do not as yet have is any state or any local school system (with the possible exceptions of Fall River and Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Buffalo) that has formally begun or is formally contemplating the logical extension of the record of success compiled by magnets and other forms of schools of choice. And that logical extension is the idea that <u>every</u> public school should become a school of both parent and teacher choice and of shared governance.

As Eugene T. Reville, superintendent of the Buffalo Public Schools, said in a recent interview in <u>Equity and Choice</u>, "I think a good modern school system ought to provide as many options as possible. In that sense, I think <u>every</u> school should be a magnet option. <u>Every</u> school ought to compete with every other school. One of the major problems we have in the public schools is that they all point to the almighty norm, with the result that they offer a dull and uninteresting education for children. What we need is to provide enough options -- different kinds of good educational programs -- to satisfy the total demand of parents, teachers, and students."

What Reville and those of us in American education who support the idea of parent and professional choice within the public schools want is the creation of a wide diversity of individual school communities, individual schools of choice, that are inhabited by parents, students, teachers, and administrators -- all of whom have chosen to be there and all of whom therefore agree on what kind of school it should be, what its goals are, and how it should operate. Only if we have school systems based on this idea will our public schools be able to provide the educational excellence everyone is looking for.

It does not seem likely, however, that such an extension, including the ideas of parent and teacher involvement in deciding what the choices will be and in the governance of schools, will occur until Governors, state legislatures, and state departments of education require local systems to do so.

Policy Recommendations

What these generalizations clearly say about the state of diversity and choice in this country is that our Governors, state legislatures, and state departments of education are not faced with the comparatively simple task of tinkering a bit with our existing state and local system of public schooling.

The task the states have before them is not to provide a little more diversity here and a little more choice there or even simply to encourage local school systems to begin moving in this direction if they choose to do so.

Since each state bears the ultimate ownership of and therefore the ultimate responsibility for public schooling within its borders, the role of Governors, state legislators, and state departments of education should -- and, we think, must -- be to establish educational diversity and parent/professional choice as the new basis for all public schooling in their state.

This means that Governors, state legislators, and state departments of education should be designing and putting into place a new system of public education in this country, a system that will essentially be a public school voucher system within each of our states, a system designed to provide parents with the right to choose the kind of public schooling their children will receive and teachers with the ability to practice the kind of schooling they believe will be most professionally satisfying. This new system also must include the requirement that both parents and teachers have a share in the day-to-day governance of their schools of choice.

In order to accomplish this major reform of public education in this country, Governors and state legislatures must pass two kinds of legislation:

- o Legislation that requires every local school system to provide a diversity of schools and parent choice for all parents within its district (intradistrict choice). Such legislation must contain

guarantees that all school districts will be desegregated and that equal access to all schools and resources will be provided for poor and minority students. Such legislation also must provide categorical aid funds to assist local districts in planning and initially implementing such districtwide systems of diversity and choice.

- o Legislation that requires all local school districts to allow the choice by parents of schools in districts other than the one in which they live (interdistrict choice). Such legislation also should provide, in addition to desegregation and equal access guarantees, financial assistance to make such interdistrict choice a reality.

Additional reasons for such legislation and more details about how such legislation should be formulated and what it should contain are included below in the answers to the other questions and most particularly in the legislative initiatives described in Section VI below.

How do we retain standards in the face of increased responsiveness to the consumer?

Findings

This is clearly a crucial question closely related to -- and, indeed, an integral part of -- the first question.

If our states and local school systems are consciously trying to create a diversity of schools that parents have asked for and then allow parents to choose the ones they want, then the states must not only continue to exercise the basic control over such a system of public education, but also must devise and put into practice a different approach to the question of maintaining educational standards.

Most of the respondents interviewed for this study made a clear distinction between three types of "standards" when talking about what the proper role of the state should be in relation to system of diversity and choice (or increased responsiveness to the consumer):

1. State guidelines describing the full range of educationally legitimate kinds of schools that local systems could develop and implement. If such schools are to be established, however, they should not rule out the creation of new kinds of schools, but should simply provide general rules for local systems to follow and should provide for state review and approval, at the request of all local districts or of parents and teachers within a local district, of any school or schools about which a question has been raised.

2. Competency-based minimum standards of achievement in the basic skills of language arts (reading, writing, and so on) and mathematics, possibly with statewide testing of all sixth, eighth, and twelfth grade students.

3. State-established curriculum requirements mandating specific courses -- and/or the specific content of courses -- that all students in the state must take.

While almost all of the respondents agreed that the state should control and "set standards" in the first two categories, it was the last category that caused the widest degree of disagreement. Some local systems -- such as those in Buffalo and Pittsburgh -- claimed to have no argument with the current approach of states establishing and imposing on all schools, all parents, and all teachers such general requirements as "four years of high school English" or "three years of high school mathematics." They claimed that the standards established by their own boards of education were often "higher" or more demanding than the established state standards.

Other respondents argued against the state imposing such curricular standards, saying that state standards defining courses and especially standards mandating specific course content already are undermining the ability of local districts to establish a truly diverse range of schools (Montessori schools were mentioned as the most common example of a kind of school that was most endangered by such mandates, particularly above the sixth grade level).

Practice seems to suggest, however, that there need not be an inherent contradiction between demanding academic standards and parent choice and diversity in education, so long as those standards are carefully designed to reflect and encompass the wide variety of ways students can and do learn and therefore the many different ways schools can be organized and run.

As noted, some school administrators claim that their local academic standards are higher than those set by their particular states. Experience and public opinion polls also suggest that parents want high academic standards for their children, often higher standards than their state or local public schools are willing or able to offer. We know of no instance in which any parent has consciously and deliberately requested a school that has "low" academic standards, nor have we ever heard of a parent who did not want his or her child to become fully competent in all of the basic skills. Indeed, just the opposite is almost always the case -- parents complain that the academic standards of the schools they are offered are far too low, that their children are <u>not</u> learning all of the things they should be learning. Given choice, parents always seem to gravitate to schools that provide solid academic achievement, even if the way such achievement is obtained and the specifics of what is learned may vary widely.

In this sense, then, parent choice is more likely to <u>assist</u> in the maintenance of high standards than to pose any threat to them.

It is true that, aside from full competence in all basic skills about which there is not disagreement, parents (and educators, for that matter) often will differ not only about the best <u>way</u> for children to be taught, but also about the specific <u>content</u> to which children should be exposed. Some parents may quite justifiably feel that their musically talented child,

instead of four years of high school English and two years of high school music, should have four years of music and only two or three years of English.

It is in these areas of legitimate educational differences that state policymakers need to exercise extreme caution in order not to put school systems and individual schools into a curricular straitjacket.

Virtually all respondents in this study appeared to agree that minimally any and all state-imposed standards should deal only with the expected outcomes of either basic skills standards or curricular experiences and never with the way such outcomes are to be achieved.

Policy Recommendations

It seems clear that if parent choice is to be a reality, then schools must be allowed to be created and to develop in distinct and diverse ways. Governors, state legislatures, and state departments of education must monitor systems of choice and must make sure all students are acquiring at least minimum competency in basic skills and achieving minimum standards of competency in such things as understanding how a democratic society works.

The ways such competencies are to be achieved, however, must be largely the domain of local schools systems and the principals, teachers, and parents who will be asking for and choosing the schools they want.

We would therefore recommend the following state actions:

1. The creation of state guidelines describing the full range of educationally legitimate kinds of schools that local districts could develop and implement and a process of state review and approval for new kinds of schools and programs.

2. Competency-based minimum standards of achievement in the basic skills of language arts, such as reading and writing, and mathematics, possibly with statewide testing of all sixth, eighth, and twelfth grade students.

3. State-established standards specifying what other competencies (history, civics, foreign languages, science, the arts, and so on) should be and a competency-based testing policy that allows great diversity as to means.

What happens when the ARB (state aid per pupil) follows the student out of a local district and into another district?

Findings

There are a wide variety of responses to this question depending upon the particular state. The answers ranged from "very little" in states that have no special provisions for out-of-district transfers to "a great deal" in such states as Minnesota and Colorado that have been making moves in the direction of providing specific legislation promoting interdistrict choice.

The "very little" response typically adds up to a situation in which parents may elect to send their child to school in another district but must apply for and receive the permission of the receiving district, must pay the full cost of tuition in that district, and also must pay the full cost of all transportation involved. The receiving district in most cases acquires the state aid per pupil for such a student while the sending district usually surrenders any such state aid.

Needless to say, this kind of interdistrict transfer does not happen very often, since this arrangement, short of an absolute prohibition against transfers, could not be more effectively designed to make sure that students do not go to school outside their district of residence.

Some states and metropolitan areas, of course, have interdistrict transfer programs created, in most cases, as a result of either voluntary or court-ordered desegregation cases (Boston and its surrounding Metco communities; Rochester, N.Y., and its suburban communities; St. Louis and its metropolitan districts; Hartford and its neighbors; Milwaukee and its surrounding area; and Indianapolis and its Marion County school districts, as instances).

In some cases, these are voluntary one-way busing of minority students to suburban schools (Massachusetts and Metco). In other instances, the exchange of such students, while still "voluntary" on the part of parents and students since it involves voluntary enrollment in "magnet schools," is "two-way" (minority students out, majority students in) and has been ordered by a federal court (St. Louis).

In most of these cases, the "state aid per pupil" travels with the student, and additional funds are made available by the state at least to make up the cost of tuition in the receiving district. The state also usually covers the cost of transportation.

In those states such as Minnesota where Gov. Rudy Perpich has put forward a comprehensive, statewide interdistrict transfer plan, the idea of interdistrict transfers has met considerable opposition from established educational interests.

Another interesting approach to the education of students that uses educational resources not supplied by the student's local school district is the Educational Clinics Incorporated (ECI) approach in the state of Washington.

These are privately owned and operated "schools" designed to educate those students for whom conventional schooling is inappropriate -- students who have either dropped out of conventional schools or who are in danger of doing so for a variety of reasons, ranging from a failure to achieve and family or personal problems to a simple inability to learn under the conditions imposed upon students by conventional schooling.

The ECI "clinics" develop individual learning plans for each of their clients, much in the way a medical clinic would prescribe a series of

treatments for its clients. Some of these students return to their conventional schools, others go on to pass a GED exam.

Under a special Washington law, the cost of educating these students in the ECI clinics is paid directly by the state, and the local district does not receive state aid for the student unless and until the student returns to school in the district.

Policy Recommendations

Every state should develop and pass legislation establishing a comprehensive plan permitting interdistrict transfers from any district in the state to any other district and for the direct support of nonschool district educational settings such as the ECI clinics. This legislation should specifically provide for voluntary two-way inner city/suburban transfers in metropolitan areas where such transfers would promote racial and economic desegregation.

The necessary components of a successful interdistrict choice plan are the following:

- It must be clear that no district is going to suffer undue financial hardships as a result of the interdistrict movement of students. This means the state must assure all receiving districts that the full costs of educating students who transfer in will be met by the state, i.e., the district will receive the normal state aid per pupil plus any difference in the cost per pupil not covered by state aid.

- The sending district must be assured that it will lose only the normal state aid per pupil and will not be required to pay any additional tuition costs.

- The full cost of transportation by whatever means is most economically feasible (public transportation, car pooling, or interdistrict busing) will be paid by the state with the state acting as fiscal agent.

- In each case where desegregation is assisted by such a transfer, the receiving district should receive a financial bonus for admitting that student.

How are rural schools affected by choice when it is either statewide or for urban districts?

Findings

In Minnesota, under Gov. Perpich's proposed interdistrict plan, according to the Minnesota State Department of Education, several of the bill's opponents claimed that some rural districts might lose their students if interdistrict choice was permitted, but they could produce no evidence that such had ever been the case or would necessarily be the case.

What the prospect of interdistrict choice has done in Minnesota is to cause some rural school districts to rethink their historic role of total independence. While it has not lessened their resistance to efforts of consolidation of their smaller districts into larger ones, it has produced a willingness to consider cooperative efforts, of districts banding together to share teachers and resources, and thereby to afford specialized courses that no district could afford on its own.

One thing that several respondents did point out, however, was that such interdistrict choice plans often appear to place undue hardship on rural parents and students opting to leave their home district for another. Such students usually have to travel long distances and often pay the cost of transportation themselves.

They suggested that, while states should make such interdistrict transfers possible, states would probably have to carry most of the costs -- including transportation and the cost of tuition in the receiving district above and beyond the state aid that would come with the student.

But some of the respondents suggested that simply allowing students to go to school in another district (which might simply be the rural district next door) was not really a solution to the problems of rural students and rural school districts. The problems they most often cited -- inadequate curricula, limited auxiliary services such as counseling, and so on -- would not be solved in this fashion.

They suggested that a better solution might be legislation permitting and encouraging groups of rural districts to band together into cooperative organizations, perhaps similar to New York's BOCES groups, that would enable districts to plan together, to share specialized teachers, and perhaps even set up choice systems in which particular schools could specialize in particular types of education and draw students from all districts. The creation and operation of such collaboratives would be funded by the state.

Policy Recommendations

The overall policy recommendation here is that states should initiate interdistrict transfer plans, as described above, but that rural schools should be treated as a special category. While rural parents and students should not be denied choice, they should not be forced into choices that would require traveling long distances. Rural school districts therefore should receive special help from the state to make it possible for them to compete with other districts, perhaps in the form of categorical aid programs that would specifically encourage cooperative efforts among districts.

Questions Relating Both to the Role of the State and the Role of Local Districts

What are the implications of choice for contracts with teachers?

Findings

There are three areas in which the teaching profession, and therefore teacher contracts, are immediately affected by parent choice.

The first is that, if there is to be a workable system of educational diversity and parent choice of the schools their children will attend, teachers also must have the ability -- through collective bargaining and written into contract -- to be involved in deciding what the various kinds of schooling to be offered by a local system will be and then be able to apply to practice the kind of schooling they believe will be most professionally satisfying. This does not mean that any teacher can be guaranteed a position in any particular school. But it does mean that the schools parents want will be created by the local school system and that teachers are then free to apply for positions in those schools if there is an available position. Such schools can be created, of course, only if parents ask that they be created. In that sense, then, parent choice must always take precedence over teacher choice.

Such teacher choice is necessary, since it simply makes no sense to speak of a genuine diversity of educational offerings and choice for parents if those schools of choice are not also staffed by teachers and principals who have also chosen to be there and who wish to practice that particular kind of schooling.

Nor does it make any sense to talk about public school teaching as a genuine "profession" unless and until teachers have at least this measure of autonomy and power over how they will practice that profession.

Putting low pay aside, there is probably no single factor that causes more dropouts and burnouts in the teaching profession than the lack of control over their professional lives. In combination with the involvement in the governance of their school (see below) and decent pay, establishing this sense of control probably will do more not only to retain good people, but to recruit good people into the profession than anything else we could possibly do.

It is therefore extremely important that, again as with the parents, teachers and principals be surveyed and asked what different kinds of schooling they wish to practice and then play a significant role in deciding what the schools of choice to be offered will be, always with the provision that parent choice will take precedence.

The second major issue of importance here is that of seniority and the assignment of teachers to the schools they wish to teach in.

Several of the respondents in this study said they were able to operate choice systems under their existing contracts, so long as the contracts contained provisions allowing teachers to ask for voluntary transfers to the schools where they wished to teach. Several other respondents, however, pointed out that even if their teacher contracts allowed voluntary transfers, the task of building an appropriate staff for each school of choice was seriously hampered by the seniority provisions in most teacher contracts.

These provisions usually mean that if two or more teachers apply for a position in a school of choice, the teacher with the greatest longevity within the system is awarded the position, whether or not that teacher is best qualified to teach in that particular school.

Some school systems, however, reported having developed more sophisticated and effective approaches to teacher choice and teacher assignment. In Buffalo, for instance, if an opening exists in a magnet school, all teachers in the system are notified of the vacancy and may apply. All applicants are screened either by the principal or by a committee made up of the principal, teachers, and parents in the school. Seniority is not taken into account. A final recommendation, which generally amounts to a final selection, is made to the central administration that then assigns the teacher to the school. This process of teacher choice has been successfully negotiated with the local teachers union.

A similar system is used in staffing the magnet schools in Lowell, Massacusetts. In this school system, all applicants for positions in magnet schools, including all teachers and all principals, are screened by a committee made up of the citywide magnet school director, a union representative, the principal of the school (in the case of teacher selection), representatives of the school's existing staff, and representatives of the school's parent body.

This committee ranks the applicants and recommends their first choice to the superintendent and the school board for appointment.

A third crucial factor, mentioned by several respondents and especially by the representatives of the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers, was that there should be teacher (as well as parent) involvement in the governance of all individual schools of choice (and thus in the governance of all schools).

The most common recommendation here was for each school in every local school system to have a governing board made up of the school's principal, elected representatives of the teaching staff, and elected parent representatives. This board, operating under general guidelines developed by the local school board and monitored by central administration, would be responsible for determining the school's educational philosophy and curriculum, screening and recommending all staff, and supervising the spending of the school's budget.

Two working examples of such arrangements are the City Magnet School (a micro-society school) in Lowell, Massachusetts, and the Graham and Parks Alternative Public School in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Policy Recommendations

1. State law should require that all teachers (as well as all parents) within a local system be annually surveyed to determine the various kinds of schooling the system should be offering. The assignment of teachers to schools of choice (and thus essentially to all schools) should be as voluntary as possible and should depend, first, on teachers volunteering to teach in the school of their choice and, secondly, on the selection of teachers for particular schools on the basis of their educational qualifications for the position, with seniority not a relevant consideration. The selection process should begin with a screening committee made up of the principal, elected teacher representatives, and parents of the particular school.

2. Teachers must be involved in the governance of the school in which they teach, preferably through the establishment and operation in all schools of governing boards made up of the school's principal, elected teacher representatives, and elected parent representatives.

Are teachers being fired? Are principals? How do teachers protect themselves from weak administrators?

Findings

Virtually every respondent agreed -- indeed, it seems all too obvious -- that the introduction of parent and professional choice within a school system requires not simply school site "accountability" but a considerable degree of school site autonomy.

Individual schools of choice must have the power to establish their own individual philosophies and unique goals (within broad guidelines laid down by the state and the local board of education), to design their own special curricula, to set up their own procedures for school governance, to devise their own staffing patterns and staff development activities and to have some control over staff selection, to decide how parents will be involved, to control large segments of their own budgets, and so on -- in short, all of the things that normally go under the banner of "school-based management."

Most of the respondents also were mystified -- as we were -- by the questions as to whether teachers and principals were being fired. Teacher choice does require a considerable amount of voluntary shifting of teachers to make sure schools and teachers match each other. A teacher in a school that practices a kind of schooling with which the teacher does not agree is probably not going to do his or her best work. That same teacher, having voluntarily chosen a kind of schooling he or she wishes to practice, has a very good opportunity to become a first class teacher.

But to our own knowledge and to the knowledge of our respondents, there have been no recorded instances of any teacher or principal being fired because of choice or greater school site autonomy.

In the choice system being proposed here, all certified and tenured teachers in a system of choice retain their tenure and all other rights within the system. Although no teacher or principal has any tenure rights to a position in a particular school, no teacher or principal, once he or she has been recommended by the governing board of the school and appointed by the superintendent, should be forced to leave his or her school involuntarily, unless outright incompetence is involved.

Teachers and principals who turn out not to be suitable for a particular school often are encouraged to seek a voluntary transfer to another school, but except for outright incompetence or unless a dwindling school population requires a systemwide reduction in force, teachers and principals with tenure in the system have as much job security as before.

Also, in a system of parent and teacher choice in which each individual school of choice has a governing board on which elected teacher representatives serve, teachers can protect themselves against "weak" or, for that matter, overly repressive principals in two ways: by raising the issue with the governing board and perhaps having the board ask the central administration for a new principal; or by voting against the principal with their feet, i.e., by asking for a transfer to another school, just as a parent can by transfering a child to another school.

Any principal running a school that has a long list of teachers asking for transfers and from which many parents are withdrawing their children, or a school in which the governing board has asked for his or her removal, is clearly failing to do his or her job and is a clear candidate for replacement by the central administration.

In this sense, then, both academic and staff "accountability" are built in to any genuine system of parent and teacher choice. If a school is not performing up to the standards set by the state and the local board of education and, perhaps even more importantly, is not carrying out its own stated goals, that fact is going to be quickly evident to both the teachers and parents in that school, probably long before such failure is apparent to the central administrators.

Policy Recommendations

School systems seeking to implement choice plans should design and institute an organizational structure of school-based management, with clearly spelled out procedures for parent choice (and parent withdrawal), teacher and principal choice and selection and careful procedures for the replacement, and, if necessary, removal of unsuitable staff. All of these arrangements must be designed and implemented through a close working relationship with the local teacher and administrator unions and written into all contracts.

What are the ways school districts and departments of education have educated parents to make intelligent and informed decisions when offered choices among schools?

Findings

Most of the respondents reported that state departments of education have done little in this regard. A notable exception is the state of Massachusetts and its Bureau of Equal Educational Opportunity, which has consistently advocated, required, and financially supported a wide variety of parent education and information mechanisms.

School districts themselves have developed and used a large number of different ways of attacking this problem:

Parent Surveys: A few Massachusetts school districts (Lowell, Worcester, Fall River, and New Bedford) have, as part of their initial planning, conducted surveys of all parents (and teachers) in the district asking what kinds of schools parents and teachers want.

Experience in these cities has shown this is a remarkably useful educational device, since it requires parents to begin thinking about and learning about the wide variety of schools that they can ask for. Worcester, for instance, has conducted three such "magnet school" surveys. In the first survey, the return rate was 38 percent. In the second, conducted a year later and after parents had became more familiar with the idea of choice, the return rate rose to 50 percent. In the third survey, the return rate rose to 80 percent. The parents in Worcester, which now has ten schools of choice developed as a result of the surveys, were clearly becoming increasingly informed about what different kinds of schooling would be possible within their system and increasingly comfortable with the idea of making choices.

Parent Information Centers: Many systems have set up one or more parent information centers, staffed by parents who speak all of the relevant languages, that supply other parents with information about the choices available, answer questions, and so on, and often are empowered to make at least tentative assignments to schools.

Cambridge, for instance, has an open enrollment system allowing parents to ask that their child attend any school in the city, so long as such attendance either improves or does not harm the overall desegregation of the city. Any parent seeking a transfer from one school to another and all new parents registering children in the system for the first time must do so at the school system's central parent information center. There they are fully informed of all of the possible choices available to them. The various educational options or choices are carefully explained and discussed before a parent makes a choice.

Brochures and Other Printed Material: Almost every system of choice prepares and distributes descriptive brochures and other printed material prepared in all appropriate languages to all parents, sometimes in the form of a single booklet describing all of the available choices. In St. Paul, Minnesota, such a booklet is distributed to every household in the the city, thus making sure that nonpublic school parents and the parents of preschool children are informed, as are all those citizens who do not have school-age children.

Parent Fairs, Open Meetings, et cetera: Again, most school systems operate these kinds of activities designed to acquaint parents with the range of choices available to them. Often these are "recruiting" sessions where individual schools actively seek to recruit children for their school.

Media: Most school systems also make extensive use of radio, television, newspapers, et cetera, to get their message out.

Policy Recommendations

School districts involved in or contemplating systems of parent choice should be required by the state to develop sophisticated and comprehensive parent information and education programs similar to those described above. State departments of education should become knowledgable about all of these procedures and provide technical assistance to school districts and parent involvement groups and agencies in developing even better and more elaborate systems, including special programs aimed at informing the parents of poor and minority children.

Questions Relating Primarily to the Role and Operations of Local Districts

Aside from programs designed for targeted groups such as dropouts and the gifted, how have systemwide programs worked?

Findings

Every respondent in this study who is part of anything that could be called a "systemwide" program of choice declared flatly that they work and work well, if carefully designed and executed.

While most of this experience has come through "magnet" schools created as a result of the necessity to desegregate and while we lack sustained and systematic research on the topic of schools of choice, what we do know (mainly from the Blank/Lowry study) and what the respondents in this study reported is roughly that the following things occur when parents and students are provided with choices within their public school systems:

- Choice, at least in magnet schools, produces higher student achievement, higher student attendance, fewer dropouts, fewer suspensions, and fewer requests for transfers to other schools.

- Choice increases both parent and community involvement in individual schools and in the public school system as a whole.

- Choice produces not only greater parent involvement in but greater parent satisfaction with the public schools.

- Choice within the public schools in most cases not only halts flight to the nonpublic schools but reverses any such trend.

- Choice, because of greater parent and student satisfaction, greatly increases public support of the public schools -- not only support in terms of an enhanced image of the public schools in the public mind, but in an increased willingness to support the public system financially.

Indeed, what we have learned from most of our recorded instances of public school choice suggests that the more "systemwide" a program is, the better it works.

This conclusion arises from two primary problems created by the introduction of a limited number of "magnet" schools into a system:

- The parent (and general public) perception that the specialized "magnet" schools are the "best" or "first class" schools in the system while all of the other, nonmagnet schools are of lesser quality or "second class." This has often caused severe morale problems in the nonmagnet schools and charges of unfairness in the allocation of scarce funds.

- The resulting rush on the part of parents to get their children into the magnet schools and the "camping out on the school grounds" phenomenon and the creation of long waiting lists for seats in the magnets (the Pittsburgh and Buffalo examples). In many cases, this has led to intense frustration on the part of many parents and, in some instances, a belief that parent choice is some kind of hoax.

This has led several superintendents, such as Buffalo's Eugene Reville and St. Paul's David Bennett, to endorse the idea that what we should be working toward is a public school system in which every school is a school of choice requested by the parents (and teachers) in the system.

The parent surveys conducted in such Massachusetts communities as Lowell and Worcester give us an idea of how this might be done.

In both of these communities, the local school board and central administration created a Citywide Parent Planning Council made up of parent representatives from every public school in the city. These councils, working closely with the school administration, studied the full range of possible schools of choice and then created the parent surveys asking parents what kinds of schools they wanted for their children.

In the first of the Worcester surveys, for instance, roughly 40 percent of both the parents who responded said they wanted "fundamental" or "back-to-basics" schools for their children (although minority parents as a group were less enthusiastic in this regard, with only 27 percent asking for such schools). The remaining 60 percent of the parents wanted other kinds of schools, such as Montessori, "open" or "developmental" schools, "continuous progress" schools or "micro-society" schools, schools devoted to the performing arts, science and technology, et cetera.

From such surveys, local school systems can obtain a general idea of the range of different kinds of schools parents want and an idea of how many of each kind of school it would be necessary to create to respond effectively to what the parents in the system want.

Policy Recommendations

1. Governors, state legislatures, and state departments of education should require that every school in a local public school system should become a school of choice.

2. The determination as to what the range of choices should be, should be made only as a result of carefully designed and conducted parent and teacher surveys that also will provide information as to how many of each kind of school should be created.

3. Teachers and principals also should be surveyed to determine the different kinds of schooling the professionals in the system wish to practice and to determine the match between what parents want and teachers want.

4. States should provide each school district with both technical assistance in the conduct of such parent/teacher surveys and the necessary funding to conduct such surveys.

What are the characteristics of choice programs that work? What are the characteristics of programs that don't work?

Findings

Both the respondents to this study and the authors believe the following attributes are characteristic of choice programs that work and are necessary if choice programs are to work (roughly but not strictly in order of importance):

- o A genuine commitment on the part of the local school board, the superintendent, and the central administrative apparatus to the idea of providing parents, teachers, and principals with a systemwide variety of choices or educational options from which they may choose the one or ones they believe are best.

- The involvement of the entire community, but especially the parents, teachers, and principals of the system in the initial planning of the system of choice, through citywide parent planning councils, the involvement of teacher and principal unions, and a completely open planning process.

- The decision as to what educational options (different types of schools) the system will offer must be made as the result of careful surveys of parents and of teachers and principals.

- The planning for choice must be systemwide, involving all schools, all parents (including nonpublic school parents and the parents of preschool children), all teachers, and all principals. Every school eventually will become a school of choice. In addition to parents, teachers, and principals, the business community, social agencies, and all groups interested in public education must be involved in the planning. No interest group should be left out. A concerted and conscious effort must be made to involve poor and minority parents and their representatives in all aspects of the planning.

- As much planning as possible must be done at the level of the individual school and must involve parents, teachers, and principals in the planning of which of the survey choices that individual school might wish to become.

- Whether or not formal desegregation is required, the choice program must be designed with very careful controls to ensure that poor and minority children have equal access to all of the choices, that every school of choice ends up with a student body, a parent body, and a staff that is roughly representative of the school district's population as a whole (see Question 3 below).

- The choices developed and offered must be distinctive and clearly different kinds of schools rather than minor variations on some standard model. There should be a wide range of such different kinds of schools, including very traditional, back-to-basics schools, "continuous progress" schools, Montessori schools, "developmental" or "open education" schools, and even "micro-society" schools in which children design and run their own democratic society in school.

  Each of these structurally unique schools also, of course, can have a special curricular emphasis such as the fine and performing arts, science and technology, computer-based learning, the life sciences, the communications arts, and so on, again depending upon what parents and teachers want.

- Through the parent/teacher surveys and other methods of market research, the school system must acquire at least an approximate grasp of how many of each kind of school is desired by parents and can be staffed with principals and teachers. The system thus will know roughly how many of each kind of school to provide. These schools then will be carefully distributed throughout the school district to

minimize transportation; often, many children can walk to the school of parental choice.

- o Free transportation must be provided for all children who cannot walk to their school of choice.

- o Both the planning process and the implementation process must be adequately funded.

The characteristics of programs that don't work or have a much greater chance of not working are the opposite of the characteristics described above. That is, choice programs that are imposed from outside a local system without the full involvement of parents, teachers, principals, central administration, and the community at large have worked but have not worked as well as choice systems that have such involvement.

Indeed, each of the characteristics described above, while good and beneficial in and of itself, depends to no small extent on the presence of the others for its success. If a single element is missing -- such as parent and professional surveys or a parent information system -- the entire process is damaged.

Policy Recommendations

1. Governors, state legislatures, and state departments of education should require (mandate) that every local school system provide systemwide parent (and professional) choice.

2. Such a state mandate also should require that local school systems develop and implement their systemwide choice plans through engaging in a careful, open, and all-inclusive planning process such as that described above.

3. States should provide categorical aid funding for the planning and initial implementation of choice systems to all local school districts voluntarily applying for such aid.

A more detailed description of such legislation is contained in Section V below.

How do school districts maintain racial balance in districts offering choice?

Findings

The great majority of the respondents (and the authors themselves) either work in or are directly involved in districts that are desegregating at least in part through choice, in most cases through magnet schools. To a perhaps not so remarkable degree, they (and we) see carefully controlled parent and professional choice as the most important, and perhaps in the long run, the only acceptable, way to achieve peaceful and educationally productive desegregation.

Every practitioner and every expert in this field agree, of course, that no one is or should be talking about or advocating unfettered choice but rather "controlled" or "managed" choice systems consciously designed to produce desegregated schools.

Parent choice of schools in all known cases of desegregation is always thus constrained so that the movement of students by choice either produces greater desegregation or at least does not have a harmful effect on desegregation.

In almost every case this is being accomplished through what is usually called a "controlled admissions and transfer policy" established as a crucial part of the initial design of choice systems. Usually these policies limit parent choice and student movement serves to increase desegregation in both the sending and receiving schools.

This generally means that minority students in predominantly minority schools may choose to transfer to predominantly majority schools and vice versa. Racial and ethnic guidelines for desegregation vary widely from state to state and court case to court case, but the most commonly accepted standard seems to be that every school in a district should not vary by more than 10 percent plus or minus the districtwide minority percentage.

Given an optimum goal such as this, choice systems are then organized and all transfers "controlled" so that all movement by choice always produces greater desegregation. Cambridge, for instance, has a policy that allows parents to choose any school in the city so long as space is available in the school chosen and so long as such a choice serves to improve -- or at least not harm -- the racial make-up of both the sending and receiving school.

Every school in a systemwide choice situation involving desegregation must have clear enrollment goals built into the controlled admissions and transfer policy. These can be goals to be achieved over a specific period of time ("within five years the minority enrollment of School X will be within 10 percent plus or minus the citywide average").

What is crucial here is that school systems be given sufficient time to conduct the careful, all-inclusive planning process described above and then are allowed time for parent choice to perform its miracles and produce the constitutionally required desegregation.

Policy Recommendations

Parent and professional choice should be the primary mechanism for achieving desegregated schools and school systems. In designing and implementing such systems of choice, states and school districts should explore carefully and institute if possible the idea of districtwide (as well as interdistrict) choice in which every school becomes a "magnet."

How do districts handle timelines so that parents make decisions about schools in time for districts to plan for the following year? How do schools make plans about district or school size and under- or over-utilized facilities when enrollments may vary from year to year?

Findings

Most of the respondents agreed that the introduction of systemwide choice plans require serious and considerable reorganization of a system's central administrative apparatus.

In order to plan and implement a choice system such as that described above, the respondents said (and our experience supports their contentions) the following administrative mechanisms need to be created and the following general types of activities should be conducted:

- o A single person should be assigned the basic job of conducting the planning enterprise. This person should be supplied with an adequate planning staff.

- o A complete (and, if possible, computerized) data base needs to be created, including all information on students, professional staff, number and capacity of buildings, et cetera.

- o A parent and community planning unit should be created to assist in the creation of citywide planning councils, the design and conduct of surveys, and the creation of the parent and community information system, including parent information centers, media, publications, and so on.

- o A careful and elaborate timetable must be developed, so professional staff and parents are fully aware of what is supposed to happen and when it is supposed to happen. This includes giving parents adequate time to learn about the choices available to them and to make the choices. Pittsburgh's school system, for instance, requires parents to make their choices in October for the following year. Parents are asked to make first, second, and third choices (also a fairly standard practice) on the supposition that some schools of choice will be oversubscribed and therefore some parents will not be able to get their first choice schools.

- o A detailed school facilities use plan, based to a large extent on the results of the parent surveys, needs to be developed so that the required number of different kinds of schools can be planned and available.

- o An elaborate staff development program, preparing teachers to teach in the different kinds of schools, must be developed.

- o Once the system begins operation, all of the normal central administrative operations now must be geared to making the choice program work.

In short, the institution of a citywide choice program requires not necessarily the addition of large numbers of new administrative staff, but the development of a new administrative structure and the reassignment of existing personnel to new kinds of jobs.

The respondents also pointed out that the careful planning and implementation of a citywide choice system requires time as well as initial start-up funding. The most common estimate of such a required time frame from start to moderate implementation was five years, with full implementation requiring perhaps ten years.

Policy Recommendations

States should require local school systems to institute adequate system of advance planning and management in the creation and operation of system so choice and should be prepared to fund such activities until they are fully implemented (see Section III below for a fuller discussion of costs).

How are transportation problems resolved and what are the costs?

Responses

Of all of the questions, this was both the easiest and the most difficult for respondents to answer.

The immediate response in many cases was that, yes, transportation costs are considerable and will probably always be so. Pittsburgh, for instance, will spend $17 million this year on magnet school busing.

What rapidly became clear, however, was that the responses depended a great deal on each school district's particular situation. The small surburban community of Acton, Massachusetts, which gives parents a choice of any of its four elementary schools, said choice had not raised their busing costs at all since virtually every elementary school child travels to school by bus anyway.

Newburgh, New York, which operates four magnet schools, reported that, in the context of the school system's total busing needs for all children, including special needs, bilingual, and all children living more than a mile and half from school, magnet school busing added very little to the overall transportation budget. They had never even bothered to compile figures for magnet school busing.

Or, in a quite different situation, Community School District Four in New York City, which operates almost a dozen schools of choice, reported that the vast majority of the children going to a school other than their normal "neighborhood" school still could walk to their new school or were simply given tokens or passes to ride the public transportation system at very little cost to the school district.

On the other hand, in those situations in which interdistrict choice was involved (and these were primarily urban/suburban transfer plans such as those in the metropolitan areas of Boston, Milwaukee, St. Louis, Indianapolis, et cetera), transportation costs were considerable.

Indeed, after a while it began to appear that, since each situation was unique, there were very few generalizations that could be made either about the overall cost of transportation or about how all districts were resolving these problems.

Two things, however, did become clear:

1. While most districts do spend additional money transporting students to magnet schools, this is in part an artifact of the frequent practice of providing special buses for this purpose and calculating the cost separately from the total cost of all transportation (often because of state reimbursement requirements for desegregation purposes). Not too many systems were planning and operating total transportation systems covering all busing needs. Such a system would mean that in most cases a single bus might be carrying magnet school children, bilingual children, special needs children, and so on and dropping them off at their appropriate destinations. But it is still only one bus.

2. One factor that appeared to increase transportation costs for choice (at least for getting children to a system's limited number of magnet schools) was the simple fact that there were so few choices available. Given a situation, for instance, in which a student living in South Buffalo chooses to attend and is admitted to the Campus East back-to-basics magnet school, that student must be transported halfway across the city of Buffalo to get there -- at considerable expense to the city of Buffalo and the state of New York. There does not happen to be a back-to-basics magnet in South Buffalo (indeed, there are no magnet schools at all in South Buffalo).

These two "discoveries" led us to do some hard thinking about the costs of parent choice, the results of which are contained in the following section of this report.

THE QUESTION OF FUNDING: DOES CHOICE COST MORE?

The conventional wisdom insists that providing parents with a wide range of different kinds of schools that they can choose must inevitably cost a great deal more money.

To many of us this has always seemed obvious, and we can point to the national experience with magnet schools to back up our perception. By and large, magnet schools have cost more money to create and run than the ordinary cost of running the typical "neighborhood" school. And it has always seemed obvious as well that it costs more money to transport students to a magnet school that to have them walk down the street to that nearby school building.

The Blank/Lowry study of magnet schools supports this conventional wisdom, after a fashion. The study found that the average additional cost per student in a magnet school in 1981-82 was $59. A large but unknowable percentage of this cost, the study pointed out, was for start-up costs. Since this area cries out for a great deal more research, and since more magnets are being created every day, there is no way now to determine the average cost of magnets in 1985-86 might be.

There is also the clear evidence for the urban/suburban interdistrict transfer plans, all of which appear to cost a great deal of money (and most of which do).

But we are beginning to wonder if the conventional wisdom is completely correct -- especially if a slightly larger and longer range view is taken.

If we assume for a moment that the proposals made in this report and voiced, for instance, by Buffalo's Superintendent Eugene Reville are taken seriously, if we assume that what we are or should be attempting to do is to make every public school a magnet or school of choice, then the cost situation changes dramatically.

In the first place, there appears to be evidence -- as the Blank/Lowry study suggests -- that the primary cost of developing a school system based upon parent choice is the cost of planning and early implementation. These costs are by no means insignificant, although no one has as yet been able to separate out the costs of start-up and initial implementation from the general cost of the school system as a whole. What we do know is that the most advanced magnet or choice systems (such as those in Buffalo, Cincinatti, Milwaukee, Pittsburgh, and Dallas) would not be where they are today if it had not been for outside funding provided either by the federal government through the Emergency School Aid Act or by states. None of these choice systems would probably even be in existence if they had been forced to raise the start-up money from their local taxpayers.

But at least one of these systems, Eugene Reville's Buffalo, now claims that it is the start-up costs that are the main costs of creating schools of choice and that Buffalo is now not spending any more money on their magnet schools (once they are up and running) than they are on nonmagnets. Once the school of choice has been designed, once the facility is there and equipped with whatever special equipment it needs, and once it has been staffed with the faculty it must have, such a school should not receive any more money than any other school gets, according to Reville.

We also are not assuming that every school in the system has to be unique and in some way totally different from every other school in the system. Indeed, as the Worcester and Lowell surveys show, parents do not necessarily want every school to be different.

For instance, 40 percent of the parents in Worcester said they want back-to-basics schools. In Worcester, this would mean that roughly 40 percent

of the system's schools should be of this type. And this would mean that these schools should not only be created but that they should be distributed around the city in such a fashion that, even within desegregation requirements, many of children of parents opting for those schools could walk to school. An almost equal number of parents said they wanted "continuous progress" schools, also distributed in such a way that many children could walk to school.

Only those schools that only a few parents wanted -- in Worcester's case, Montessori schools and "open" or developmental schools -- would have to be citywide schools drawing students from far distances.

And this, of course, begins to give us a handle on lowering the cost of transportation to schools of choice. If the most popular schools are properly distributed throughout the system and only those schools attracting the fewest students require long-distance busing, then we are pretty much back to a situation where a completely integrated transportation system (involving choice students, special needs, bilingual students, and all those children normally transported) need not cost much more than transportation costs now.

What all this means is that, if we assume that we are willing to pay for the planning and other start-up costs for making every school in the system a school of choice of a kind requested by parents, a school system based on parent choice need not in the long run cost much more to operate than our present nonchoice system.

If the long-term benefits of providing parents and teachers with the public schools they want is weighed against the short-term costs of planning and implementation, choice becomes one of the best bargains offered in a long time.

GENERAL SUMMARY OF POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

General Recommendations

1. Governors, state legislatures, and state departments of education should establish as state policy and state law that all parents must be able to choose the kind of public school their children will receive and, within the limits of constitutional equity and practicality, to choose the individual public school their children will attend. Such parental choice should be the basis upon which both state systems and local systems are organized and operated.

2. Such parental choice must apply both to choice of schools within the public school district in which the parents live (intradistrict choice) and to schools in other districts (interdistrict choice).

3. All such parental choice, either intradistrict or interdistrict, must be limited and controlled to guarantee that all poor and minority children have equal access to the kind and quality of public schooling their parents wish them to have. In many cases, this will necessitate formal desegregation.

4. Teachers and principals also must be able to choose the kind of schooling they wish to practice and, within limitations of constitutional desegregation and affirmative action, to apply for positions in the school in which they wish to teach. States also should make it possible for duly qualified and certified teachers to move from district to district without loss of tenure, benefits, and seniority. Such choice is required if public school teaching is to become a genuine profession and if high quality people are to be recruited into the profession.

5. States must require that every local school district conduct annual parent and professional surveys to determine the different kinds of schooling parents want for their children and that the district's professional staff wish to practice, and the degree of satisfaction that parents and professional staff have with their local public schools. These surveys should be prepared with the assistance of and the cost paid for by the state. The results of all such surveys should be made public.

6. States also should mandate that every individual school of choice (and therefore all schools) in every local district be governed by a school governing board or council made up of the school's principal, elected representatives of the school's professional staff, and elected representatives of the school's parent body (and, in the case of secondary schools, by elected representatives of the school's student body). The governing board or council of each school, operating under general guidelines developed by each district's central board of education, should have specific power to establish the school's educational philosophy, curriculum, and operational organization; have a controlling voice in the selection of its staff; and control significant parts of the school's budget.

7. Governors, state legislatures, and state departments of education, while setting statewide competency-based standards in all basic skills and basic subject matter, should seek to achieve educational excellence primarily through the establishment throughout every local school district of individual schools of choice. This means creating individual school communities in which everyone in the school -- parents, teachers, and administrators -- agrees on what the educational goals, educational style, and educational operation of the school should be and all of whom have freely chosen to be there.

8. In the case of interdistrict choice, states must provide to receiving districts financial assistance above and beyond but including normal state aid per pupil to cover any additional costs of educating students from other districts. Transportation costs also should be provided.

9. In the case of intradistrict choice, states should assist local school districts, if the districts choose to accept such state assistance, to plan and implement their systems of parent and

professional choice. This should come through a categorical aid program providing state funding for such planning and implementation, funding that can be used only for these purposes and cannot be used to supplant local school funding. If a school district applies for and accepts such aid, they must develop a long-range, districtwide "schools of choice development plan" for state approval and funding (see legislative section below).

STATE LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES SUGGESTED BY FINDINGS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following brief descriptions of possible legislative initiatives promoting both interdistrict and intradistrict parental choice of schools have been basically drawn from the policy recommendations made by the respondents and from the authors' experience in the field with a wide variety of choice programs and systems. Existing state legislation has also been used, especially Gov. Rudy Perpich's proposed but unpassed Minnesota law allowing interdistrict transfers and Massachusetts' Chapter 636 law providing for intradistrict choice in desegregation situations. Indeed, the intradistrict legislation outlined here is essentially Chapter 636 extended to cover all school districts, whether or not desegregation is involved.

Possible Legislation Promoting Interdistrict Choice

This type of legislation should accomplish the following things:

1. It should require that every school district, within careful guidelines developed and monitored by the state, must allow parents living in that district to apply for the admission of their child or children to schools in other school districts, and allow parents living in other districts to apply for admission to any school within its district.

2. The state guidelines governing such voluntary interdistrict transfers should contain the following conditions and restrictions:

   - o The decision to request such a transfer is made solely by the parents or guardians of each individual student.

   - o Each school system must maintain an annual determination of the operating capacity of each individual school facility in the district and an accurate monthly determination of the actual enrollment of students in that facility in order to determine the number of "available seats," if any, in each school in the district.

   - o Within all limitations required by existing desegregation orders (if applicable), students living in the school district will have first preference for any and all such "available seats" (intradistrict choice takes preference over interdistrict choice).

- o Any and all remaining available seats may be filled by students volunteering in from other districts. Once a student from another district has been admitted, that student is guaranteed a seat until and unless the parents decide to remove the student.

- o Any and all such transfers must serve to improve or not adversely affect the racial make-up of the receiving school, or the make-up of the sending school.

3. In the case of such an interdistrict transfer, the state aid per pupil and all other state and federal aid funds will follow the student to the receiving district as if the student were a resident of that district.

4. Any remaining difference in the cost per pupil of educating such a transfer student in the receiving district would be determined and paid by the state.

5. In order to promote the racial and economic integration of metropolitan areas, a bonus state aid payment would be made to any receiving district accepting a student whose attendance improves the racial and economic make-up of the district.

6. The state would pay for the cost of such interdistrict transportation by whatever means is most cost-effective -- public transportation, school bus, car pooling, and so on.

7. Rural districts would be provided with additional state aid funds earmarked for the development of school district collaborative efforts to expand course offerings, auxiliary services, and the hiring of adjunct teachers.

Possible Legislation Promoting Intradistrict Choice

This type of legislation should accomplish the following things:

1. It should require any and all local school districts in the state to provide both parent and professional (teacher and principal) choice in all schools in the district.

2. It should provide state categorical aid funding for any school system applying for such aid. Such school systems would be provided with initial planning funds (including funds for technical assistance in planning) and would be required to:

   - o Develop a long-range (five- to ten-year) plan detailing how they propose to plan and implement their system of parent and professional choice. This plan would be submitted to the state department of education for review and approval by the state board of education.

- o Spell out in the plan how they propose to deal with all civil rights and desegregation issues, including how the choice plan will provide guaranteed access for all poor and minority students.

3. If the submitted plan is approved, the state should provide state categorical aid funding directly to school systems for the following types of activities (with no funds used to supplant normal school district expenditures):

   - o The development of a central, adequately staffed planning unit, including parent involvement and evaluation personnel and technical assistance in planning and implementation.

   - o The creation of permanent citywide parent involvement mechanisms, such as citywide parent planning councils, parent information centers, multilingual parent liaison workers, and so on. Special attention would be required to make sure that poor, minority, and non-English-speaking parents are fully involved in the planning of choices and are fully informed of their possible choices.

   - o The creation and conduct of annual parent/teacher/principal surveys to determine the range, type, and number of different kinds of schools that parents, teachers, and principals want and the degree of satisfaction that parents and professionals have with their local system of public education. Such surveys would be sent to all public school parents, all parents of nonpublic school students, and all parents of preschool children living in the district. Guidelines and technical assistance in the preparation and conduct of such surveys will be provided by the state department of education.

   - o The planning and establishment of school-based management systems for all individual schools in the system, including the establishment of governing boards and the possibility of lump-sum budgets based upon the number of students any individual school is able to attract and hold.

   - o The planning and initial operation of individual schools of choice (funds only over and above the normal operational costs of each such school).

   - o The evaluation of both individual schools of choice and of the choice system as a whole.

   - o The cost of all additional transportation necessary due to choice.

SURVEY OF STATE OFFICIALS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Prepared by
Evans Clinchy
Senior Field Associate
Institute for Responsive Education

APPENDIXES

A. Sources of Information

   1. Local School Districts

   2. State Departments of Education

   3. Additional Sources

B. Questionnaire Used

LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Direct Interviews

Dr. Gary Baker
Assistant Superintendent
Acton Public Schools
Acton, Mass.

Dr. David A. Bennett
Superintendent of Schools
St. Paul, Minn.

Dr. Seymour Fliegel
Deputy Superintendent
School District 4
New York, N.Y.

Dr. Leon Hayes
Director
Secondary Magnet School Program
Dallas, Texas

Dr. Irene Jameson
William Thompson
Information services
Philadelphia Public Schools
Philadelphia, Pa.

James Lamar
Staff Director
Office of Student Placement
Baltimore, Md.

Larry Marshall
Executive Manager
Alternative Education
Houston Public Schools
Houston, Texas

Walter Millman
Assistant Superintendent
Newburgh Board of Education
Newburgh, N.Y.

Dr. Alexander Moore
Assistant Superintendent
Indianapolis Public Schools
Indianapolis, Ind.

Dr. Robert Stein
Director of Community Relations
San Diego Unified School District
San Diego, Calif.

Dr. Leonard B. Stevens
Federal Monitor
Cleveland City School District
Cleveland, Ohio

Paul Strollo
Acting Executive Assistant to the Superintendent
Rochester City School District
Rochester, N.Y.

Anthony J. Trujillo
District Superintendent
Sweetwater Unified School District
Chula Vista, Calif.

Dr. Susan Uchitelle
Executive Director
Voluntary Interdistrict Coordinating Council
St. Louis, Mo.

Dr. Donald R. Waldrip
Former Superintendent
Cincinnati Public Schools

Dr. Richard C. Wallace Jr.
Superintendent of Schools
Pittsburgh, Pa.

LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Published Sources and IRE Field Experience

Dr. Eugene T. Reville
Superintendant of Schools
Buffalo, N.Y.

Other Participating School Systems (Massachusetts):

Boston
Brockton
Cambridge
Fall River
Holyoke
Lawrence
Lowell
Lynn
Medford
Methuen
New Bedford
Revere
Springfield
Worcester

STATE DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION

Direct Interviews

Charles R. Cassidy
Associate in Education Integration
Division of Civil Rights and Intercultural Relations
New York State Department of Education

Dr. Charles Glenn, Director
Bureau of Equal Educational Opportunity
Massachusetts State Department of Education

Other Sources

Dr. Charles Davis
Executive Vice President
Education Clinics, Inc.
Seattle, Wash.

Ted Kolderie
Hubert H. Humphrey Institute
of Public Affairs
University of Minnesota
Minneapolis, Minn.

ADDITIONAL DIRECT INTERVIEW SOURCES

Bella Rosenberg
American Federation of Teachers
Washington, D.C.

Angela De Lorenzo
Intergovernmental Relations Analyst
National Education Association
Washington, D.C.

Appendix B

QUESTIONNAIRE

I. Questions Directly Involving the State (Governors, Legislatures, and State Departments of Education) But Also To Be Asked of Individual School Districts

1. What happens when the ARB (state aid per pupil funds) follows the student out of a local district and into either another district or into another educational entity such as a public or private college or university? If your state allows any such use of state funds:

   a. How does it work? Straight tuition payments by the sending district with state funds included? State providing the difference between per pupil costs if they exist? State picking up the full cost of tuition?

   b. If your state does not have any provision for state funds following the student, what would be the principal difficulties in getting such legislation passed? The resistance on the part of local districts to lose such state funding, for instance? Would legislation requiring the state to pay for such costs have any chance of passing?

2. What is the role of Governors, legislators, and departments of education in encouraging and assisting choice in public education?

   a. What is your state doing now to encourage and assist choice?

   b. What is your state contemplating doing? And/or, what would you see as appropriate ways your state <u>should</u> be encouraging and assisting choice?

3. How are rural schools affected by choice when it is either statewide or for urban districts?

II. Questions for Both State Officials and Local School District People

1. How do we (both state and local districts) retain standards in the face of increased responsiveness to the consumer? How does one reconcile state-wide standards and requirements and district-wide standards and requirements (either testing or curriculum requirements) with providing parents choice among schools that may or may not agree with those requirements?

2. What are the implications of parent choice for teacher contracts? Are teachers to have choice as well as parents? How are or should teachers be assigned to schools of parent choice? What changes would have to be made to existing teacher contracts to institute a system of parent (and perhaps teacher) choice?

3. Implied in choice is increased school site accountability (school site or school based power and management?). Are teachers being fired? Are principals? How do teachers protect themselves from weak administrators?

   a. What powers do individual schools of choice (if you have them) now have in your state/district?

   b. How is staffing actually handled? Can teachers be transferred involuntarily? Has any teacher or principal ever been fired because of parent choice? Are there arrangements for teachers to ask for a change in principalship?

4. What are the ways school districts and departments of education have educated parents to make intelligent and informed decisions when offered choices among schools?

   a. Does your state department advocate the use of surveys of both parents and teachers to determine what kinds of choices parents and teachers want? Have any districts actually conducted such surveys?

   b. Does your state department and/or your local school district have specific mechanisms for informing and educating parents about their choices? Parent information centers? Recruiting brochures and recruiting systems? Parent outreach? Parent coordinators/advocates? Citywide parent councils?

III. Questions Related Primarily to the Role and Operations of Local Districts

1. Aside from programs designed for targeted groups such as dropouts or the gifted, how have systemwide programs worked?

2. What are the characteristics of choice programs:

   a. that work?

   b. that don't work?

3. How do school districts maintain racial balance in districts offering choice?

4. How do districts handle timelines so that parents make decisions about schools in time for districts to plan for the following year? How do schools make plans about district or school size and over or under utilized facilities when enrollments may vary from year to year?

5. How are transportation problems resolved and what are the costs?

RESPONSES TO THE NATIONAL GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION ON PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE

Prepared by Mary Anne Raywid
Professor and Chairperson
Department of Administration and Policy Studies
School of Education
Hofstra University

WHEN THE MONEY FOLLOWS THE STUDENT OUT OF THE DISTRICT

There are some who have claimed that one major benefit of the choice arrangement should be forcing improvement on a change-resistant system -- by putting the weakest schools out of businesses entirely, and forcing somewhat better ones to improve in order to attract a clientele. Others have suggested, however, that entirely the opposite effects are possible: that instead of forcing improvements on weak schools, the choice provision tends to weaken them still further by permitting the departure of the strongest families -- who then are no longer bringing reform pressure.

Whether these or other results ensue will depend more, perhaps, on what system decisionmakers choose to make of the situation. In New York City, a "High School Redesign Program" instituted by the former chancellor closed down the poorest schools and extensively redesigned them. The old Ben Franklin High School, for instance, which was graduating a grand total of only 7 percent of its students, was shut on orders from the chancellor. In its place emerged a school of choice, the Manhattan Center for Science and Math (which now boasts the highest daily attendance rate of any high school in the city).

In Minnesota this year, eleventh and twelfth graders have had the option of pursuing individual courses or a full program in postsecondary institutions (technical institutes, colleges, and universities). The program has been successful so far as the students are concerned, but there have been fears on the part of the districts involved about the state funding they take with them. (A proportionate share of state funding follows the student, calculated on the amount of work he or she is pursuing at the new institution.) The legislature has subsequently introduced some clarifications and modifications in the Post-Secondary Options Act, but overwhelmingly reaffirmed its confidence in the program.

Another kind of evidence from New York also suggests something of the effects that choice-related financial losses can bring. Manhattan's District 4 has operated on the choice principle for more than a decade. It has attracted almost 2,000 out-of-district students. In the last several years it seems to have inspired a choice system in neighboring District 5; and another neighbor -- District 3 -- is now in the process of setting up such a system. Thus, given the quality improvement that choice typically brings, it appears that the arrangement can prove a rather effective reform catalyst -- bringing highly positive effects to other area schools, not the more negative ones some critics fear. In Manhattan, school funding is based on building enrollment. Thus as out-of-district youngsters have transferred to schools in District 4, they have in effect taken their funding with them.

Milwaukee and St. Louis represent two somewhat different ways of handling the financial questions raised by interdistrict options systems. Both have choice agreements with surrounding suburban districts. When suburban youngsters enroll in St. Louis magnets, the state's funding share moves with them -- the same being true when a St. Louis youngster transfers to one of the twenty-four suburban districts that are part of the plan. In Milwaukee, however, both sending and receiving districts receive the state allotment for

the student who transfers -- thus relieving the stake of the abandoned district in retaining the student. In both cases the state assumes transportation costs so that those are not an expense issue for either of the districts involved.

It must be added, however, that both St. Louis and Milwaukee are operating under court-approved desegregation plans and are able on that score to claim out-of-district funds. Cross-district choice systems that are otherwise inspired might lack such advantages. One possible response might be transfer of state funds to the chosen district with one or the other paying transportation costs. Another might be a jointly worked out credits and debits system entered into by several districts, whereby an equal balance of students sent and received is expected to be maintained by each participant over a specified period.

Such a system might well serve one challenge to which some districts must respond: the maintenance of full, high quality programs in the face of enrollment declines. Thus, cooperative interdistrict magnet programs -- enabling one to offer a performing arts magnet, and another to provide the area's science and math magnet, and another to sponsor its dropout-prevention program -- are in varying stages of exploration and development in suburban and semi-rural areas.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CONTRACTS

For many, one of the strongest arguments for the choice arrangement is the restructuring and de-bureaucratizing it can bring. Such an outcome would be of recognized benefit to teachers; yet teacher organizations are understandably reluctant to sacrifice important protections standing them in good stead under current conditions.

Some local teacher organization leaders have recognized the potential of choice for the increased professionalization of teaching, and for the substantial improvement in teacher working conditions that choice can bring. The result has often been an agreement tacit or formal, to suspend application of at least some contractual provisions in choice programs. This has enabled teachers to choose and be chosen for such programs, thus suspending seniority rights as well as other facets of normal school appointment procedures. It also has enabled teachers in choice programs to take on after-hours assignments without pay, and to share in policy decisions, curricular design, and other administrative functions.

There seems to have been no formal contract modifications yet made explicitly to accommodate the choice arrangement -- although such accommodations are apparently now under consideration in at least some districts as a preventive against desegregation suits and orders. Several of the districts that have been involved in interdistrict desegregation arrangements have included plans for teacher exchanges.

In Milwaukee, plans were discussed for facilitating suburgan/city teacher exchanges, but such discussion ended upon the filing of litigation. The plan had been to enable teachers to choose the exchange arrangement for a specified

period. They were to assume the obligations designated by the receiving district, while retaining the salary and rights of the home district. A staff exchange program is part of the St. Louis arrangement, and perhaps twenty teachers have been involved this year. The exchange is for a year's duration. It is encouraged by an incentive (a $2,500 bonus) for those requesting such transfers.

As this suggests, however, the questions that choice poses for the intradistrict bargaining process, and for particular contractual provisions, have largely gone unaddressed to date. It has been impossible to locate districts that have formally confronted such questions as the revision of seniority rights and the augmenting of mobility advantages for teachers who might wish to exercise choice prerogatives.

Meanwhile, agreements to relax the application of some contract provisions to choice arrangements continue to occur. Such an arrangement may become a formal provision of collective bargaining agreements. If this sounds unlikely, it is based upon the evidence of gathering teacher organization conviction that the choice arrangement may also be in their best interests. As AFT President Albert Shanker said in his written testimony to the NGA task force in December, "I believe that we in the teacher union movement ought to support the greatest possible choice among public schools by parents, students, and teachers."

RETAINING STANDARDS

Concerns about the fate of standards in a choice arrangement typically involve three kinds of matters: whether desired common learnings will be taught; how much (or how little) will be learned; and how we are to find out about these things.

Choice and diversity are not necessarily incompatible with common learning. Certainly there are skills that all young people should acquire, and there is knowledge that all should have. Such common learnings can and should be specified by states and the list supplemented by school districts. But this requires specifying the required learnings in particular ways. As some states are currently doing so, they are in effect mandating each fact to be learned (and even by implication, which instructional methods to use in teaching it). Such detailed specification is not compatible, of course, with a diversified school system. But neither is it compatible with good teaching in any sort of educational system.

Common skills to be learned can be specified without much difficulty of the sort under consideration here. But common knowledge needs to be specified in terms of the understandings and concepts to be acquired, not as content to be memorized. This makes it possible for different schools to present different content, and to package and sequence it in different ways and in different contexts. This kind of specification of common learning requirements is necessary to the compatibility of such requirements with the idea of school diversification. But it is also important, in the eyes of many educators, to the effective conduct of schooling of any sort, diversified or uniform. For instance, John Goodlad -- perhaps today's single most respected

educational scholar -- insists that knowledge goals for schools can be specified only as concepts, not detailed content, if teachers are to be able to teach effectively. For education, unlike some other endeavors, makes differential means essential to arriving at common ends. If framed the way Goodlad urges, there is no reason that common learnings requirements cannot be carried out more effectively in choice programs than in other schools.

This is not to say, however, that there are no common knowledge learnings to be acquired. Youngsters need to achieve a degree of cultural literacy, along with the skills and common understandings mentioned above. This requires, for example, that they know who Shakespeare was, something of what he accomplished, and that they know what the Civil War was, when it occurred and what precipitated it. But is is probably unnecessary that the "cultural literacy" agenda loom so large for high school students as recent state mandates have required. A better content balance might call for higher proportions of skills and concepts than of specific cultural literacy items.

It remains to be seen how much curricular diversity schools of choice will be permitted to retain. Current arrangements in a number of states call for prior state approval of departures from mandated curricula, e.g., Pennsylvania and New York. It is as yet uncertain how readily such approvals will be obtainable.

Concerns about standards in schools of choice are appropriate: although responsiveness to youngsters and their families is much to be desired, it is no guarantee of educational quality (educational free market advocates to the contrary notwithstanding). Districts and states have an important interest in assuring quality, and at least in public schools, parents are entitled to feel confident that their youngsters' achievements reach reasonable levels: that they are learning a reasonable amount and learning it reasonably well. This calls for some sort of measure external to the school that yields some kind of commensurability enabling parents to understand their children's progress in relation to that of youngsters in other schools. The challenge is how to devise such a measure without tying it to the particular content taught in some schools, and thus penalizing youngsters at others. Such bias, of course, yields entirely erroneous notions about how effectively the several schools are performing. It is a serious problem with some standardized tests, virtually all of which focus on factual material that has either been presented and memorized or has not been. Tests that were conceptually oriented -- to match and complement the way Goodlad and others urge that content goals be specified in the first place -- would solve this problem. It would be entirely appropriate for states and districts to require administration of such measures to assure that choice programs were maintaining proper standards.

In Minnesota, Education Commissioner Ruth Randall has said repeatedly that Gov. Rudy Perpich's "Access to Excellence" plan offered to substitute competency demonstration for mandates. The strategy was to leave schools free of dictates, but to hold them accountable instead through statewide student achievement tests. It remains to be seen whether such tests can be devised without penalizing legitimate and desirable curricular differentiation.

Other choice systems look to different kinds of evaluation in assuring standards. For instance, Jefferson County, Colorado, which offers several

choice programs, conducts a detailed curricular audit every five years. The process involves both local committees (of teachers, administrators, and parents) and external evaluators who work together in assessing each program's curricula. A panel of outside experts is also the way other choice programs attempt to validate their curriculum and emphases. This kind of procedure is probably preferable to a reliance on mandates and standardized testing programs. And it may prove necessary to reversing the strong current pressures toward uniformity.

There are also other ways in which choice programs are under constant scrutiny and assessment. Academic achievement is not the sole measure of success. There are other things for which parents should and do hold schools accountable, e.g., the nature and quality of the experiences the child is undergoing there; the kinds of attitudes and values the child is taking on; and the extent to which the child is developing, as fairly distinct from what he or she is learning. Parents of youngsters in choice programs tend to have a strong advantage with respect to accountability of this second general sort, since they may well have selected the choice program precisely for the kinds of experiences it affords and encourages. Because they tend to have more contact and involvement with the school, there are more opportunities for parents to observe what is occurring and how their children are reacting and behaving. It appears, then, that the added responsiveness of choice programs to those most closely associated with them need not come at the cost of standards or accountability.

THE ROLE OF STATE OFFICES IN ENCOURAGING CHOICE

The present juncture of several trends in educational history makes this a time for setting real precedents with respect to education-related responsibilities: in the first place, the state share of educational funding has increased markedly; in the second, public interest in education and its improvement is at peak levels; in the third, state activity in almost all the states has imposed extensive new requirements on schools and teachers. We have made some mistakes in who should do what, and how. The choice matter poses opportunity not only to realign present roles, but to redress the impacts of recent errors.

In brief elaboration of these points, it seems clear that the increased state responsibility for financing schools would and should be accompanied by increased responsibility for their effective operation. But early state response to these new obligations has brought mixed results. It appears that some of the requirements imposed by the ensuing legislation may actually have exacerbated school problems instead of solving them. Legislation offering encouragement to the choice arrangement may prove an ideal antidote -- an effective way to deal with the resulting situation, as well as to improve education.

State governments can contribute substantially to the spread of choice in public education. Governors can do so through recourse to the bully pulpit, which Washington has used so effectively, as well as through their more formal leadership functions. Governors can do much, for instance, by emphasizing the

centrality of choice to our national values. Both public interest in school reform, and the burgeoning difficulties stemming from the "excellence" legislation of the past several years, also recommend formal leadership at the state level in opening the choice possibility.

State governments can assist and encourage the choice arrangement by providing incentives for intra- and interdistrict choice programs. Incentives seem preferable to mandates or to any other form of coercion for two major reasons: (1) to impose the choice arrangement is inescapably to render it less effective and successful than when it is voluntary for all involved; and (2) arrangements that are coercive in nature are bound to rally and congeal opposition, whereas voluntary arrangements arouse far less.

It should be pointed out, however, that an incentive system would undoubtedly affect fewer districts, schools, and children than would mandating opening enrollment in all of the state's schools: some districts would undoubtedly elect to forego the incentives, and families in those districts would be deprived of choice opportunities. It is also possible, of course, that those districts most resistant to the choice idea would be precisely those where it is most needed. On the other hand, however, as suggested above, mandates may be a lot less politically viable and, simultaneously, less successful in improving schools.

It might be possible to seek both sets of goods this way: an incentive arrangement that provided bonus incentives to those districts that both established a choice arrangement and accepted enrollees from neighboring districts. The second bonus might well cover tuition costs for out-of-district enrollees. In some states such a provision also would have to explicitly free families from any control by their district of residence. Such an arrangement could open choice opportunities to residents whose districts do not extend them, but it would do so without forcing the arrangement on all districts. It might therefore combine the advantages of maximal political viability and maximal educational promise.

Through the provision of incentives for launching individual choice programs and choice systems, state governments can encourage school districts to do so. Special start-up funding is especially important. States can stimulate cross-district arrangements through incentives like Wisconsin's, whereby the state pays transportation costs, and both sending and receiving districts receive full funding when a student crosses district lines to attend a choice program. States also can stimulate the generation of choice programs for particular groups where emphasis may be needed, e.g., for the dropout prone, by raising funding levels for schools targeted for such groups, or for the students involved.

In addition to monetary incentives, state governments can offer yet another quite different and equally powerful inducement to the spread of the choice arrangement. By offering exemption to choice programs from the detailed regulations now governing instructional content, scope, treatment, and evaluation in many states, state governments can provide a powerful start-up incentive, and simultaneously a mechanism vital to school improvement. Such an inducement is not just coincidental to the choice

arrangement: if choice is to mean anything, then schools must be diversified and differ identifiably from one another. To be able to differ, they must be freed from the uniformity imposed by the tightened controls of the last several years. This in turn will introduce the shifts in responsibility and prerogatives that researchers increasingly hold critical to school improvement. Choice, then, can prove an important link in the restructuring and de-bureaucratizing of public education.

All this suggests new roles and responsibilities for state departments of education. They are the appropriate agencies for establishing guidelines for choice programs that will qualify for the incentives, and they should promulgate evaluation criteria for monitoring and assessing the programs thus created. This will be a new realm of responsibility for almost all state education departments, since few have much to do with existing choice programs within their states. Only where states have encouraged choice in connection with desegregation have state education departments had much official responsibility associated with such programs. But new state incentives will make education departments responsible for state guidelines to specify such matters as equity expectations, overall goals choice programs must meet, the parameters of curricular and instructional possibility, and student achievement expectations.

It also will be reasonable for states to directly monitor choice systems -- and either to provide direct monitoring for individual choice programs, or to arrive at ways for sharing that responsibility with districts. State departments need, then, to develop criteria for evaluating choice programs and the achievement of their students, as well as suggested indicators for ascertaining that criteria are being met. Since national standardized tests are strongly biased in favor of conventional curricular offerings and organization, it follows that measures other than such tests are necessary to avoid loading any evaluation system with negative bias against the newer programs. The challenge of balancing the interests of achievement commensurability, and school-to-school comparisons, against those of inappropriate comparisons and accountability measures needs to become a primary responsibility of state education departments.

Meanwhile, a range of more specific and concrete encouragement of schools of choice is underway in a number of states. In at least four -- Virginia, New York, New Jersey, and North Carolina -- "Governors Magnet Schools" are in various stages of development. These are regional, specialty high schools, e.g., in science, math, technology, and performing arts for high ability students. Such programs, while doubtless offering fine educational opportunities to the ablest students, do not substantially affect the choice opportunities of the large majority, nor bring the improvements to existing schools that are often tied to choice. And they may even decrease choice prospects, since the Governor's Schools have generated charges of elitism, and protests against tracking, from a number of people who might otherwise prove highly supportive of the choice arrangement.

A number of states offer information, advice, and even technical assistance to schools and districts interested in establishing or improving choice programs. The California State Department of Education, for instance,

has a full-time specialist in such programs, and people in other state education departments are assigned such functions in addition to others. In a number of states, such as California, Florida, Iowa, and Washington, such individuals have played key roles in the launching of state associations of educators interested in schools of choice. They have facilitated networking and exchanges among such programs, published newsletters and directories, et cetera. In some states where the choice idea is new, there have been attempts to contract with universities to build relevant expertise and capacities.

To date, there have been few statewide choice programs operating. Gov. Perpich's open enrollment plan for all of the state's elementary and secondary schools was defeated. California's Commission on School Governance and Management recommended that states move toward open enrollment, but Education Commissioner Honig's commitment to another agenda he found incompatible undermined its prospects. Minnesota's postsecondary options program has now, however, been in operation for a year -- and Florida has evidently quietly operated a somewhat comparable program for a number of years. There appears to be considerable interest in the choice arrangement for weaker students: Colorado's Second Chance legislation was the most explicit, but Illinois appropriated $10,000,000 this year for alternative programs for students in difficulty, and both Oregon and Washington provide funding for clinics as an option for such students. And while these states have opened the possibility of choice as a solution for weak students, other states are looking to choice as the answer to weak schools. As elsewhere described in this report, in California, Iowa, and South Dakota there has been interest in legislation enabling students to opt out of very small schools, and poorly performing schools. (See "Rural Schools and Choice" section.) It appears, then, that states can do, and are beginning to do, a variety of things that encourage and abet the choice arrangement.

TRANSPORTATION PROBLEMS AND COSTS

Transportation problems are very different, of course, in urban, suburban, and rural districts. In most urban districts, students attending schools of choice are able to use public transportation. In suburban districts, typical patterns include public transportation where accessible, and a combination of school buses or vans. (For example, a student may take the early bus to the nearest high school and then "transfer" to a bus or van headed for the program he or she has chosen.) Rural choice programs sometimes combine parent and school bus transportation.

Within urban districts, where options systems have to date been more numerous, students sometimes receive passes for use on public transportation facilities. Elsewhere, they are sold tokens at reduced rates. One plan directly provides families with a transportation "voucher" to cover the costs involved.

The transportation costs occasioned by most extant choice systems have been in the interests of desegregating a city's schools. This has meant that these costs often have been borne by state and federal sources, and not by the district in question (an arrangement that has permitted a reduction in school costs in some districts). But the desegregation purposes also has meant that

transportation costs have been high, since considerable travel has sometimes been necessary to overcome the effects of residential segregation.

Accordingly, the best single source on the transportation costs of choice systems found these costs to be 27 percent higher than the costs associated with schools of assignment in the same districts. This was the finding of a study of forty-five magnet schools in fifteen districts by James H. Lowry and Associates. But their report adds an illustration helpful to interpreting this differential:

> The magnitude of the difference can be illustrated by examining a hypothetical district with the same total public transportation budget as the average district in our sample ($6.5 million). If this district has 15 percent of its pupils enrolled in magnet schools and has to bus all of them, the difference of $37 per pupil in magnet vs. nonmagnet school transportation costs adds approximately $175,000 to the transportation budget or about 5 percent.

It appears then that although the transportation costs of connecting youngsters to choice programs are higher, they have not to date raised overall transportation budgets very significantly. If more youngsters were involved, total cost would be higher. On the other hand, where there are more schools with choice programs, reduced travel distances would undoubtedly reduce costs. Nevertheless, writers who have addressed the challenge of the transportation needs of choice systems are unanimous in their suggestions that the costs involved be assumed at the state rather than the district level, perhaps with aid from the federal government.

HOW HAVE SYSTEMWIDE PROGRAMS WORKED?

Systemwide choice arrangements have been of two main types, one merely facilitating transfers and the other offering more clearly delineated options. The first are generally known as "open enrollment" programs and they presuppose the desirability of letting people leave a poorer school for a better one. This approach operates, then, on the presupposition that the differences among schools are largely qualitative, along a single continuum locating each somewhere between "poor" and "outstanding." In contrast, a second type of approach presupposes that there is no one best way to educate all students; accordingly, there is much greater variation among the schools to be chosen on this kind of choice arrangement. Their differences, and hence the uniqueness of each, may be largely a matter of distinctive emphases or goals; a distinctive theme or curriculum; a unique instructional approach; or a unique school environment and climate.

By and large, choice systems of the second type are far more popular and successful than those of the first. Several studies of New York City's open enrollment plan suggest that relatively few families take advantage of it, despite evaluators' conclusions that there are, indeed, qualitative differences among the schools to be chosen. The open enrollment plan may operate more generally as the opportunity to "flee from" than to "move toward."

One difference among existing choice systems pertains to their extent. In some districts, schools of choice are intended simply to solve enough peripheral problems to enable the bulk of the system to continue intact on a "one best way" principle. In other districts, however, the intent is for more extensive diversification, to enable substantial numbers to opt for schools of choice. This may mean an array of such schools, or even the full placement of particular levels on an options basis, e.g., all elementary schools or all high schools. Save, however, in the cases where all schools at a given level in effect become schools of choice, the choice programs tend to fill up, with demand outstripping supply.

A recent national study found more choice programs at the elementary school level than at secondary levels -- an unfortunate situation given the widespread conviction that secondary education is in far greater need of improvement. The defining elements of choice programs tend to differ at different grade levels. Elementary schools of choice are likely to feature different pedagogical styles and orientations, e.g., open schooling, Montessori, and traditionalist. Secondary options are likely to differ in terms of content, featuring particular themes, e.g., maritime or environmental; academic disciplines, e.g., math and science; or career areas, e.g., health services or aviation. Increasingly, particularly as schools move to respond to the burgeoning proportion of disadvantaged youngsters (minorities, poor, and low achievers), choice programs also are being designed to feature a particular kind of school environment and climate.

Schools of choice often -- although not always -- display unusual success. (See "Characteristics of Choice Programs That Work And Don't" section for the features associated with those that work and those that don't.) Youngsters attending them generally achieve more, and in various ways exhibit more positive attitudes toward school and education. Their academic achievements in the school of choice almost invariably outstrip their achievements at the prior school, and they show progress in other ways as well -- social and emotional growth and greater responsibility and maturity. They also display better attendance records in the choice program and pose fewer discipline problems. Teachers in such schools are more successful, more committed, and far more satisfied with them, both personally and professionally. The evidence suggests they work harder in choice programs, but their morale and satisfaction rates are extraordinary.

Parents, too, are more satisfied, since the choice program is likely to prove a better match for their own educational orientations and more responsive to their child's needs. Virtually every comparative study finds parents far more positive and enthusiastic about the performance of schools they have chosen than are the parents of youngsters attending schools of assignment, in the same area. The general image of local schools is enhanced, in the eyes of both parents and other adults in the community, as parent confidence improves. In districts where there are magnet programs, and the possibility of choice among a variety of alternatives, more positive public perceptions of school quality have ensued. Not every school of choice is such a success story, of course. By and large, however, to the extent that teachers are there by choice -- and are supported in developing and maintaining programs of their own design -- the likelihood of improvement over schools of assignment is high.

The following outline offers a brief summary of the research findings related to schools of choice. Although cited here without documentation, substantial warrant is available for each of the following conclusions:

The Effects of Schools of Choice on Students

On average and stronger students:

- o More school involvement and interest
- o Greater awareness of school, self, and responsibility
- o Improved attendance
- o Lower dropout rates
- o Higher achievement and performance levels

On marginal or at-risk students:

- o Improved attitudes toward school and learning
- o Enhanced self-concept and self-esteem
- o Improved behavior
- o Improved attendance and lower dropout rates
- o Greater effort, success, and achievement

Effects on Teachers

Stronger identification with school and work
Increased colleagueship and professional collaboration
Heightened efficacy
A sense of engagement in professional practice
Longer hours, more effort
Outstanding morale and satisfaction rates

Effects on Parents

Unique school approval and confidence rates
New modes of involvement and participation
More positive student/home interaction
Extraordinary identification with and loyalty to school

Effects on Other Community Members

Greater, more varied school involvement
Increased knowledge and awareness of schools
Perceptions of enhanced school quality

Effects on Schools

The choice feature improves schools by serving as:

- o a way of making them responsive to the different needs of different students;

- o a way of making them responsive to parent preferences;
- o a stimulus and mechanism for school rejuvenation;
- o an impetus to school differentiation and diversity;
- o an impetus to maintaining organizational flexibility and blocking bureaucratic rigidity in school systems;
- o a simulus to school decentralization;
- o a different, less stultifying plan for holding schools publicly accountable; and
- o a mechanism for assuring continuing school renewal.

SCHOOL-SITE ACCOUNTABILITY

As the section titled "Characteristics of Choice Programs That Work And Don't" suggests, the shift to the kinds of choice programs that work is simultaneously a shift to a different kind of authority and control structure within the program. It is a shift from controlling teachers through regulations governing their behavior to assuring cooperation and coordination through shared values. This means, as private school research has recently documented, that the challenges are not so much a matter of getting rid of the incompetent teacher, or end-running the incompetent administrator, as of creating mutually supportive terms and the esprit de corps that enable all to function at maximal performance levels.

The choice arrangement is not desirably seen as a means of controlling or expelling the incompetent. If run according to the requisites necessary to its success, such a program will probably prove no more effective at this than the prevalent bureaucratic system has. It will, however, make the bureaucratic machinery a lot less necessary to invoke. It does so by encouraging and enabling each teacher and administrator to function at the highest level of which that individual is capable. Successful choice programs have tended to reformulate the traditional administrative challenge of assuring that minimums are guaranteed, to a focus on the opposite end of the performance spectrum. They are, in effect, engaged in the task researchers have associated with excellence in the corporate world: eliciting extraordinary performance from ordinary people. Given the nation's need for so many educators and the range of ability levels among them, this strategy seems to make far more sense than gearing accountability focus and strategy to picking off the weakest of the lot.

This is one reason why the thoroughgoing consumerism that would terminate teachers who aren't chosen is ill suited to the choice arrangement in education. We could establish among schools and teachers the market situation in which the poor product goes unpurchased and its producer is driven out of business. To do so, however, would undercut and eliminate the very features that recommend educational choice in the first place. Schools do not need a strategy for identifying their weakest performers nearly as much as they need

a plan for building the kind of staff collaboration necessary for long-term educational accomplishment.

The foregoing primarily addresses the general accountability orientation of schools of choice. There is another accountability issue that also needs discussion: the choice arrangement shifts the mode as well as the general orientation of school accountability. Our primary accountability machinery today consists of formal, quantified data (test scores) and counts on such matters as percentages graduating and college admissions. Choice programs yield a different sort of accountability. First there is the matter of shared responsibility, since the chooser becomes a partner in the production of the resultant educational outcomes. Second, the changed relation this creates between school and family is likely to yield a lot more occasion for families to observe the nature and quality of the school's work. Thus, formal, quantified accountability measures assume a lot less importance, given the frequency of informal qualitative assessment opportunities.

HELPING FAMILIES CHOOSE

Several major approaches have been worked out to facilitate informed choices among the programs comprising options systems. The first efforts were limited largely to distribution of the printed word: to newspaper announcements, supplemented by brochures containing program descriptions. But it was found that such media are broadly effective only with middle- and upperclass parents. They used the printed descriptions and supplemented them as they found necessary; but lower class and minority parents tended not to do so. These parents tended not to exercise the choice prerogative -- or sometimes to do so only to choose the neighborhood school.

Initial interpretations of indifference have since given way, however, to somewhat different analyses: it has been found that instead of indifference, the situation sometimes represents a deference to expertise and a degree of confusion emanating from the expectation that school staff are in a better position to make such decisions. Many districts are now meeting this situation through personal contacts -- home visits, neighborhood meetings, and school meetings -- instead of relying solely on publications to do the job. Where choice systems have been in operation for a while, and are known in the area, meetings at schools draw substantial numbers to learn about the choices available.

Some districts have made advisors available to parents to aid in choice-making, and in many, teachers are willing to offer advice to parents requesting it, as to which choices might best suit a particular youngster. In some cases, school selection involves the agreement of three parties: the parent, the student, and the receiving school. In such cases, the school may be seeking minimal achievement levels and/or it may be seeking a seeming "fit" between the kind of environment it provides and what the student seems to need. In cases such as these, parent judgment is aided and supplemented.

Some districts take a further important step, as is the case in Manhattan's District 4 (where almost all parents are minority and a large majority of the families receive some sort of government financial

assistance). The district has no junior high schools of assignment: all junior highs are schools of choice. Accordingly, all of the district's sixth graders receive regular instruction on decision-making strategies and skills, as well as on the nature of the options available. In this way, the schools directly augment family knowledge of the choice arrangement and of the particular options it makes available.

A final way some early choice systems operated was to limit the types of options available, in the interests of holding to a small enough total to permit all families to acquire information on each, as well as in the interests of equity, i.e., denying a choice to some that was not accessible to all. Minneapolis, for instance, had only four models that were replicated throughout the city, and Alum Rock had ten. Subsequent research suggests that this is not an optimal arrangement, since it both places arbitrary limits on teacher creativity and innovation and precludes the distinctiveness contributing so substantially to success. Thus, other means are advised for aiding parents to choose, and for meeting equity concerns.

Departments of education can help assure that parents are suitably informed about the choice arrangement and the options it provides by mandating information programs, or making them necessary in the claiming of incentives. They can promulgate guidelines that parent information programs should meet -- stipulating parent education media, i.e., personal contacts as well as printed material; and the kind of information to be included in descriptive materials, e.g., number of students and teachers; kind of program available and its goals, emphases, and expectations; and kinds of students who will profit most from the program, and those it will serve less well.

CHARACTERISTICS OF CHOICE PROGRAMS THAT WORK -- AND DON'T

There is now considerable evidence about features marking successful choice programs -- and at least by inference, the traits associated with unsuccessful programs are becoming clearer. Compiling the evidence from an array of research types and sources, the following lists enjoy substantial empirical support.

Characteristics of Successful Choice Systems

- o The design of most or all programs to accommodate the range of students generally representative of the district -- avoiding the identification of target populations in terms of ability levels, such as "gifted and talented" or "low achievers."

- o Sufficient freedom from "standard" requirements and procedures to permit the design and operation of genuinely diverse educational programs differing as to goals, curriculum, instructional treatments and environment, and/or evaluation strategies.

- o Sufficient diffusion of authority to permit the staff in each program the opportunity to design and implement their own vision of schooling.

- o Genuine positive appeal of each program to a group of students within the district.

- o A blending of majority and minority concerns -- so that the school board is satisfied that each program falls within the parameters of majority or collective interests, and the minority represented in each program can find the program responsive to its particular concerns.

- o Both students and staff become affiliated with particular programs as a matter of uncoerced choice -- no assignments, "or else," or "last chance" placements for either group.

- o Genuine support and backing for the choice arrangement from central district officials.

- o Encouragement to each program to maintain its own uniqueness and distinctiveness.

- o Periodic evaluations of each program in its own terms as well as on the basis of criteria specified by the district.
- o Locations of each program that are accessible to all who might be interested.

- o Provision of good transportation services.

- o Continuous watchfulness to prevent such inequitable choice outcomes as segregation by race, class, or ability -- and willingness to deal with such problems with due regard both for equity and for individual educational choice.

- o Willingness to provide start-up funding to enable new programs to be designed, equipped, and launched.

Characteristics of Successful Individual Schools of Choice

Successful schools of choice identify choice "programs" as distinct administrative units with their own personnel (students and staff) spending most or all of the school day together. This kind of definition is important to distinguishing schools, or schools-within-schools, of choice from the less attractive and less successful opportunity to choose curricular electives.

- o Educational goals representing a broader concern with student accomplishment than content and skill mastery. A sustained interest in student cognitive, personal, and social development is typical -- character as well as intellectual development.

- o Small enough to permit the personalizing of education -- and organized so as to realize this purpose.

- o Avoidance of the usual power structure of schools, with authority concentrated in the principal's office. Education-related decisions are made by individual teachers and groups of teachers.

- o School organization is sufficiently nonformalized in official policies and regulations and nonbureaucratized to permit organizational flexibility and thus responsiveness to individual cases.

- o Structure, scheduling, and general expectations within the school all are conducive to professional interaction and collaboration among teachers.

- o Extended roles and responsibilities for both staff and students. Teachers are more broadly responsible for student growth and accomplishment, and for total school effectiveness, than elsewhere; and students feel more responsibility for the school, as well as for their own progress.

- o Each school has a clear set of goals -- specifying a mission that is embraced by all staff members.

- o There is considerable self-consciousness within the school about the type of place it is and wants to be -- a preoccupation with school climate, ethos, or moral order.

- o Instructional approaches enriched by the inclusion of experiential learning strategies, and by independent study possibilities.

- o Opportunities for collaborative and cooperative learning, not solely for individual and/or large group classroom experience.

Characteristics of Choice Programs, Schools, and Systems That Don't Work

The denial or absence of any of the foregoing represent conditions or traits associated with choice programs and systems that don't work. For emphasis, the following counter-indicators of success can be repeated.

- o There is no choice for families (among viable options or meaningfully differentiated alternatives), or there is no genuine choice (by virtue of pressures on the choosers).

- o For staff, there is no choice.

- o The program is imported intact from elsewhere -- or designed by district administrators -- or otherwise generated in a manner that imposes it on those expected to operate it.

- o There is little or no lead time for staff to design the program -- and/or there is little or no time for staff to meet and collaborate in sustaining it.

- o Programs of choice are designed as "least departure" programs, representing and permitting absolutely minimal departures from other local programs.

- o Schools are forced to become schools of choice -- and the distinctiveness and coherence cannot develop.

- Parents receive little information about available choices, and the public in general hears little about the choice arrangement.

MAINTAINING RACIAL BALANCE IN CHOICE DISTRICTS

Choice systems have been used with success both to avoid and to facilitate racial balance in schools. This makes it important that such systems be designed and operated with the maintenance of balance as a conscious focal concern. Success also has been a matter of context as well as goal. In general, the relative size of the minority population has been a factor -- with smaller minority groups, and the presence of multiple minority populations rather than one, as predictors of successful desegregation. It also has been found that schools of choice are an effective component of a desegregation plan, but unlikely alone to fully realize that purpose.

Racial balance may well require quotas or enrollment caps on particular populations in the interests of arriving at proportions that approximate district distributions. The locating of choice programs is also important. They should be opened in "neutral" areas that do not clearly represent the territory of one or another of the groups to be balanced. The constituting of the options is also important: if some are clearly vocational in nature and others as clearly college preparatory, this is likely to divide choices along both racial and socioeconomic class lines. In contrast, programs that are thematically constituted, or organized around an industry rather than a job (computer science, not terminal operator; health services, not X-ray technician) have a much stronger likelihood of maintaining balance. And programs without high admissions requirements are more likely to produce racial balance.

It might be noted that the difficulties of achieving racial balance in choice programs are compounded by the current predominance of disadvantaged and minority students in urban districts. This is only partly attributable to the "'white flight" phenomenon. Strong, nationwide demographic tendencies stand as a primary factor. This situation has had two kinds of impacts on choice programs. On the one hand there have been court-ordered interdistrict choice arrangements facilitating the choice of city school options on the part of white suburban students, and facilitating suburban option selections on the part of minority urban students. Thus, both St. Louis and Milwaukee have interdistrict arrangements with encircling suburban districts.

The second sort of impact of demographics on racial balance goals in urban districts has been to reduce the preoccupation with such goals and to replace them with other concerns. The reasons probably have to do partly with the discovery that choice systems can prove so effective in improving school quality, and with a quietly growing ambivalence about integration on the part of some minority group members.

Under these several circumstances, priorities among at least some minority group spokespersons have turned to focus first and foremost on school quality, and on the availability of sound and appealing programs.

THE CHALLENGE OF TIMELINESS

The challenge of planning for a constituency of unknown size is a difficult one for new choice systems. Once programs are fairly well established, i.e., after the first two or three years, this is much less of a problem since subsequently changing interest patterns far more typically emerge as gradual trends than as sharp fluctuations. Particular programs gradually become high demand options -- and typically, it is only gradually that a program becomes unpopular (barring major changes in an existing program). But any new choice program or arrangement poses a challenge with respect to timing. One partial solution has consisted of needs assessments, or interest surveys of eligible families at the time a choice system or new program is being planned. A carefully designed survey can predict with fair accuracy which families, and how many, are likely to enroll in which programs. Such a survey can accompany, or be made part of, the periodic school census needed in any case to project enrollments.

To facilitate parent informing, as well as school planning, Spring selection of Fall choices is best. Informings (including meetings and canvassing) might well begin in February with choices made by the end of April. This permits two months before the school year's end to facilitate central office planning, and that period plus the summer to facilitate program planning. (The provision of adequate planning time for programs is repeatedly emphasized in the literature as necessary to their success. Staff planning time is vital during the Summer before a new choice program opens. It is also important, albeit in smaller amounts, over subsequent summers.)

Two sorts of exceptions might be noted, however, to the April target date of selection: selection needs to be geared, of course, to the time of adoption of the school budget -- to permit funds to follow enrollments the subsequent year. Thus, if the budget must be adopted earlier in the Spring, the selection dates need to be adjusted accordingly. Second, interdistrict choice plans may appear to many to pose special timing challenges: here, choices outside the district alter total sums available within it. This is why the Wisconsin plan, with state coverage of transportation costs, and allotments for both sending and receiving districts, appears such a good idea: it reduces tensions that might otherwise function as real counter-incentives to the choice arrangement. (Here again, however, a careful advance assessment of interests can respond at least in part to such concerns by making family preference and likely choices apparent well in advance.)

School administrators sometimes fear that instability will accompany a choice system, and particularly one that permitted transfers at any time. Initial inclinations are sometimes to bar or rather narrowly restrict transfers during the school year. Experience suggests, however, that such restrictions are not necessary. People evidently tend to have a stake in what they have chosen, and they also apparently are fairly good predictors of what will prove satisfactory to them. Hence, transfer requests during the school year do not appear to be numerous. And responding positively to them is a part of the individual concern and flexibility that the choice arrangement seeks to introduce.

RURAL SCHOOLS AND CHOICE

Can rural districts offer choice? It appears that a number of them can. Many rural districts are so situated that they can expand the choices available to local youngsters by means of collaborative arrangements with neighboring districts. Such arrangements have been pursued in Oklahoma with the assistance of state funding. It is possible also to send students to other schools for particular courses or to set up "specialty" schools in neighboring districts, with one specializing, for example, in science and math, another in humanities, et cetera. This kind of arrangement is being pursued in a small South Carolina district with three small high schools, and there is no reason why it cannot be adapted to at least some rural settings elsewhere.

Moreover, choice need not necessitate multischool possibilities, or even very large individual schools. There is no reason, for example, why a six-teacher elementary school might not be broken up into three minischools, each offering a separate pedagogical style and orientation among which parents might choose. And a high school of 300 to 400 students might similarly be divided into three or four minischools, each with a distinct theme or emphasis. It is conceivable, of course, that choices could be unevenly distributed and one program far more popular than others. Yet even under these conditions, the arrangement could yield the sorts of benefits to performance and morale that have been associated with schools of choice elsewhere.

Undoubtedly there are some rural areas that are so sparsely populated and so remote that none of the above suggested arrangements are feasible. In such areas, "distance education" possibilities (via television and computer) and independent study arrangements, have been used to expand an otherwise very narrow curriculum. And in some remote areas of California, transportation allowances have been used to help subsidize weekly boarding expenses for students living too far from a sizable school to commute on a daily basis.

But there are other rural districts that are not nearly so remote and where cross-district options are practical. An Iowa district's recent experience is informative in this regard, and has inspired relevant legislation. The Lakota District is near enough to two others to enable the district to run collaborative programs with them in connection with two particular courses. But Lakota has suffered from dwindling enrollments and now has only a handful of youngsters at each grade level. Several sets of parents have successfully petitioned the state to force Lakota to pay tuition for their youngsters in a neighboring district. The ruling, made in January 1986, is pursuant to an interesting provision adopted last year. It grants the right of state review to students denied an "appropriate" education by their districts. The term "appropriate" is intentionally borrowed from the Federal PL 94-142. The law's sponsor wanted to obtain the same rights for normal youngsters as special education students are guaranteed under the federal law. It is conceivable that the law's assurance of an "appropriate" education could prove a substantial stimulus to choice in Iowa. Certainly it can be argued that a school in which a youngster is disinterested, or a chronic failure, is not an "appropriate" educational environment for that youngster.

But the Lakota case, as well as recent experience in both Minnesota and South Dakota, suggests that legislation establishing cross-district enrollment options is perceived as a threat to the survival of rural districts. This threatens the political viability of a choice proposal. It would thus appear that states with substantial rural areas might be better advised than others not to mandate open enrollment plans. To accommodate the concerns and fears of such areas, it might prove wiser to offer incentives of sufficient strength to attract rural as well as other districts to investigate within-district and cross-district choice possibilities. On the other hand, however, as the Lakota case and others make plain, individuals can be held hostage by recalcitrant school officials -- and states ought to find some mechanism, as did Iowa, for extending options to such victims. Not all proposals will succeed. For instance, one defeated California bill would have enabled youngsters to opt out of schools whose students scored lowest on state tests. And provisions could not make it in South Dakota and Iowa that would have extended out-of-district choice to students in very small districts. Yet, it is indeed the case as South Dakota Gov. William Janklow put it, "It is wrong to imprison kids in a bad school."

REFERENCES

For further information and sources, see Raywid's article "Synthesis of Research on Schools of Choice," Educational Leadership, April 1984. In addition to "Synthesis of Research on Schools of Choice," the following published sources were consulted for this paper:

Bennett, David. "A Plan for Increasing Educational Opportunities and Improving Racial Balance in Milwaukee." School Desegregation Plans That Work. Edited by C.A. Willie. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1984.

Blank, Rolf K., et al. Survey of Magnet Schools. Final Report. Washington, D.C.: James H. Lowry, September 30, 1983.

Butts, R. Freeman. "The Dilemma of Civic Learning in the Schools of a Pluralist Democracy." High Technology and Human Freedom. Edited by Lewis H. Lapham. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Press, 1985.

California Commission on School Governance and Management. Report and Recommendations. Sacramento, Calif.: May 1985.

Chubb, John E., and Moe, Terry M. Politics, Markets and The Organization of Schools. Project Report No. 85-A15, Institute for Research on Finance and Governance. Stanford University: November 1985.

Doyle, Denis, and Finn, Chester E. Jr. "Educational Equity and Family Choice: Toward a Statewide Public School Voucher Plan." Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Education, November 15, 1983.

Doyle, Denis P., and Levine, Marsha. "Magnet Schools: Choice and Quality in Public Education." Phi Delta Kappan, December 1984, pp. 265-270.

"Educational Choice in New York's District 4." Manuscript. Washington, D.C.: Pelavin Associates, 1986.

Goodlad, John I. A Place Called School: Prospects for the Future. New York, N.Y.: McGraw Hill, 1984.

Kirst, Michael (ed.). "The Vanishing Myth of Local Control." Phi Delta Kappan, November 1984, pp. 189-215.

Manley-Casimir, Michael E. Family Choice in Schooling: Issues and Dilemmas. Lexington, Mass. Lexington, 1982.

McCurdy, Jack. Choices in Schools: What's Ahead and What To Do. Education USA/Special Report. Arlington, Va.: National School Public Relations Association, 1985.

Metropolitan Affairs Corp. Dialogue for Change: Options for Restructuring K-12 Education. Detroit, Mich.: Education Committee of Metropolitan Affairs Corp., 1985.

Metropolitan Education, I. University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee School of Education, Spring 1986.

Nathan, Joe. Free to Teach: Achieving Equity and Excellence in Schools. Minneapolis, Minn.: Winston, 1984.

Nathan, Joe. "The Rhetoric and Reality of Expanding Educational Choices." Phi Delta Kappan, March 1985, pp. 476-481.

Peters, Thomas J., and Waterman, Robert H. In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best-Run Companies. New York, N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1982.

Raywid, Mary Anne. "Family Choice Arrangements in Public Schools: A Review of the Literature." Review of Educational Research, Winter 1985, pp. 435-467.

Wise, Arthur. Legislated Learning: The Bureaucratization of the American Classroom. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1979.

Additionally, the state education officials formally charged with responsibility for schools of choice were polled. A survey conducted in 1985 by Karen Shapiro at the University of Miami concluded that forty-eight states have named such officials and all were contacted. Replies were received from twenty-nine states and these statements plus materials sent, are reflected in foregoing pages.

Finally, telephone interviews were conducted with several individuals who supplied information and materials reflected here. They are:

David Bennett, superintendent, St. Paul, Minn., Public Schools.

Glenn Campbell, executive director, Desegregation Monitoring Office, St. Louis Public Schools.

Daniel U. Levine, professor of education, University of Missouri-Kansas City.

Chris Pipho, deputy director, Information Clearinghouse, Education Commission of the States.

PART THREE: Additional Resources

HIGHLIGHTS OF STATE POLICIES

The following list is not intended to be complete or exhaustive. It simply gives examples of state programs to improve parental involvement and choice, and lists some of the states that have developed these programs.

1. Expanding Choice

ARIZONA: Arizona used choice to increase the challenge of secondary education and provide the most appropriate programs for its youth. For about ten years, Arizona has permitted families to have their children attend public grade schools (kindergarten-twelfth grade) in districts other than those in which they reside. State funds follow the student to the district of attendance. Students are not permitted to transfer from one district to another if their movement will have a negative impact on desegregation and integration plans. In 1985, the legislature allocated funds to permit public school juniors and seniors to attend community colleges or vocational programs in other school districts. Students receive high school credit for the courses they take. School districts do not lose funds if students take these courses.

CALIFORNIA: California policymakers used choice to increase the percentage of students who graduate or receive a general equivalency diploma. In 1985, California adopted the Washington state "Educational Clinic" legislation. It also provided additional support beyond the regular allocation to public school districts that are establishing programs for high school students who have not succeeded.

COLORADO: Colorado uses choice plans to reduce the number of high school dropouts. In 1985, Colorado adopted a "Second Chance Program." This permits high school students who have not succeeded in their present public high school to transfer to another district to attend a program geared to them. School boards in the districts of residence and attendance must give permission for this movement to take place. In its first year, about 140 students participated in the program.

FLORIDA: Florida has used choice programs to increase the rigor of secondary education. Since 1977, Florida has encouraged school districts and community colleges to work together. This enables high school students to take courses offered by community colleges for credit, as long as the district and college have an agreement. Most of the courses are offered in the high school, a few are offered at the college. Several thousand Florida students participate in this program each year.

IOWA: Iowa has used choice to develop programs that are appropriate for all its youth. The state department has a specialist who helps school districts establish and evaluate alternative schools. In 1985, the state adopted legislation to permit families to appeal to the State Board of Education if they felt the instructional program offered in their district of attendance was not appropriate for their child(ren). If the state board agrees with their concern, it has the authority to "order the resident district to provide or make provision for an appropriate instructional program for the student." In the first use of this law, the state board upheld an appeal from five families and ordered the district of attendance to pay tuition so eight students could attend school in an adjacent district.

MASSACHUSETTS: Massachusetts has used choice as one way to increase racial and economic integration of its students, as well as to improve student achievement. For the past five years, the state has used several methods to expand choice among public schools. Several forms of assistance have been provided to ten school districts that want to use parental choice as one way to improve programs and bring together students of different backgrounds. The Massachusetts Department of Education has helped survey parents about the most popular kinds of programs in a particular district and provide planning time for faculty members who will establish the various programs. The state has provided transportation funds to help minority students who live in Boston and Springfield attend public schools in neighboring suburbs. Research shows that the program has been popular among educators and families.

MINNESOTA: Minnesota policymakers adopted plans to use choice to increase the challenge of secondary education. In 1985, Minnesota began to let juniors and seniors enrolled in the state's public schools take courses at colleges, universities, and vocational and technical programs, with tax funds following the students. The plan has also encouraged a number of school districts to expand the number of advanced courses they offer, sometimes in cooperation with other districts or with postsecondary institutions.

OREGON: Oregon has used choice to help reduce the number of students who do not complete a high school diploma or equivalent. A state law requires school officials to talk with students who live in their district who have dropped out of school, and their parents, about receiving counseling or attending a private alternative program. If the school district and parents decide that a private alternative program is appropriate, the student may enroll. These programs must be approved by the state before a student is placed. School districts may count students who attend such programs in their total enrollment for purpose of receiving basic school aid from the state. The alternative program may bill the school district for at least the amount equivalent to the district's receipts from the basic school support fund for the pupil. The district may provide additional funds to the alternative program. About 1,100 students were served under this law during the 1983-84 school year.

VERMONT: Vermont policymakers use choice to respond to geography, long-established private academies, and a deep commitment to local control. Since the 1800s, Vermont has given local school boards the authority to establish their own secondary schools, cooperate with other school districts, or permit families to send their children to schools in other districts. If local boards decide to permit "tuitioning," families may send their children to approved public or private nonsectarian schools with local tax funds paying their costs. Private schools are permitted to charge additional funds. Approximately ninety-five of the 246 school boards in Vermont permit families to use local funds to attend various schools.

WASHINGTON: Washington has used choice to reduce the number of students who do not finish high school or receive a general equivalency diploma. In 1977, the state began to provide funds to programs called "Educational

Clinics." At present, ten of these private programs operate in the state. Students gain basic and applied skills and work toward an equivalency diploma. Approximately $2.3 million has been allocated for the current biennium to support the clinics. Research conducted by the state budget office shows these program have had a positive and cost-effective impact on young people who might otherwise have no high school diploma, be unemployed, and, in certain cases, be on welfare or in penal institutions.

WISCONSIN: The state provides funds to permit movement between Milwaukee and suburban districts to enhance desegregation programs. Neither the sending nor the receiving district loses funds if the students moves from one district to another.

2. Parent Involvement

CALIFORNIA: California provides state grants for schools that develop locally designed school improvement plans. No school is eligible to receive funds under this program unless it has a school site council that is composed of the principal, teachers, and other school personnel representatives, representatives of parents, and, in secondary schools, representatives of students.

FLORIDA: Florida encourages and supports efforts by school districts to experiment with school-based management. School districts may submit proposals to the commissioner of education requesting $500 to $5,000 for improvement plans. The improvement plans must be developed with the assistance of district and school advisory committees.

OHIO: Each year since 1980, the State Board of Education has designated a statewide theme to encourage excellence in Ohio schools. The 1985-86 theme is Year of Family Involvement in Education. The Ohio Department of Education has suggested activities to help school districts carry out the theme. School districts have promoted partnerships with other to help students accomplish their goals. In the last two years, theme efforts culminated with a statewide conference sponsored by the Marth Holden Jennings Foundation. In addition to sharing their theme-related activities at the conferences, school district representatives received certificates honoring their participation and involvement in the annual effort.

PENNSYLVANIA: Gov. Dick Thornburgh initiated a "Parents, Be a Part of It" program that focuses on elementary and secondary schools. He has appeared on televised public service announcements throughout the state to encourage parents to help with homework, and provide a place to study, to volunteer at their children's school, and to encourage good discipline. The state department has held workshops to encourage and assist school districts as they enlist parents in their children's education. The department of education also has a statewide award for outstanding parent volunteers who are nominated by school administrators.

SOUTH CAROLINA: The state requires each elementary and secondary school to have a School Improvement Council, comprised of parents, teachers, and

students. The council prepares an annual school improvement report. This report focuses attention on practices and factors that affect school improvement. The state board of education promotes greater parent involvement by encouraging regular parent-teacher conferences, increasing parent participation in school improvement councils, and offering parenting classes in every community.

TENNESSEE: The state encourages every school district to establish a task force of parents and citizens to monitor and report on school improvement projects. The state allocated $1 million to help these committees. In the last two years, 125 of the state's 141 districts have established such committees. The department of education has published a monthly newsletter that describes local committee project and results.

WASHINGTON: The state has established a $500,000 demonstration grant program for local districts and schools that want to operate school-site management programs. The money goes to local schools to help develop an improvement plan. If a school applies for a grant, it must have local board approval and a school site council, composed of parents, teachers, administrators, and, at the secondary school level, students. Thirty-eight grants were awarded for the 1985-87 period. The state will be evaluating the process by which plans are developed along with the quality of those plans.

ADDITIONAL SOURCES

The reader who wishes additional research information and resources is referred to the source listed below. The centers are funded and coordinated under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

Center for Effective Elementary and Middle Schools

The center's mission is to provide research about how elementary and middle schools can foster growth in student learning and development, to develop and evaluate practical methods for improving the effectiveness of elementary and middle schools based on existing and new research findings, and to develop and evaluate specific strategies to help schools implement effective research-based school and classroom practices.

John Hopkins University
Education Research and Development Center
3505 Charles Street
Baltimore, MD 21218
(301) 338-7570

Center for Effective Secondary Schools

The center is dedicated to learning how to improve the achievement of all students through school-site strategies that enhance student learning. Special attention is directed to the needs of disadvantaged and less successful students. Major projects include research and academic achievement, higher order thinking, at-risk students, staff working conditions, and school change.

Wisconsin Center for Education Research
School of Education, University of Wisconsin
1025 West Johnson Street
Madison, WI 53706
(608) 263-7575

Center on State and Local Policy Development and Leadership

The center's mission is to produce research useful to policy makers and their constituents, focusing on the relationships between policy and central concerns of education: teaching, learning, school organization, and student performance. The center seeks to strengthen the connections among policy, practice, and performance, gathering information about a range of educational policies, and evaluating policy options. The major projects of the center have sought to link policy practice and efforts, study emerging strategies and structures, gather educational indicators, and disseminate information.

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
The Eagleton Institute of Politics
Wood Lawn, Neilson Campus
New Brunswick, NJ
(201) 828-2210